The Marquis of Lossie

George MacDonald 1824-1905

RK.W.

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THE MARQUIS OF LOSSIE.

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THE MARQUIS OF LOSSIE.

BY

GEORGE MAC DONALD, LL.D.

AUTHOR OF

"DAVID ELGINBROD," "ROBERT FALCONER,"
"ALEC FORBES OF HOWGLEN,"

&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE MARQUIS OF LOSSIE.

CHAPTER I.

THE WANDERER.

IT was a lovely summer evening, and the sun, going down just beyond the point of the Scaurnose, shone straight upon the Partan's door. That it was closed in such weather had a significance—general as well as individual. Doors were oftener closed in the Seaton now. The spiritual atmosphere of the place was less clear and open than hitherto. The behaviour of the factor, the trouble of their neighbours, the conviction that the man who depopulated Scaurnose would at least raise the rents upon them, had brought a cloud over the feelings and prospects of its inhabitants—which their special quarrel with the oppressor for Malcolm's sake,

had drawn deeper around the Findlays; and hence it was that the setting sun shone upon the closed door of their cottage.

But a shadow darkened it, cutting off the level stream of rosy red. An aged man, in highland garments, stood and knocked. His overworn dress looked fresher and brighter in the friendly rays, but they shone very yellow on the bare hollows of his old knees. It was Duncan MacPhail, the supposed grandfather of Malcolm. He was older and feebler, I had almost said blinder, but that could not be, certainly shabbier than ever. The glitter of dirk and broadsword at his sides, and the many-coloured ribbons adorning the old bagpipes under his arms, somehow enhanced the look of more than autumnal, of wintry desolation in his appearance. Before he left the Seaton, the staff he carried was for show rather than use, but now he was bent over it, as if but for it he would fall into his grave. His knock was feeble and doubtful, as if unsure of a welcoming response. He was broken, sad, and uncomforted.

A moment passed. The door was unlatched, and within stood the Partaness, wiping her

hands in her apron, and looking thunderous. But when she saw who it was, her countenance and manner changed utterly.

"Preserve's a'! Ye're a sicht for sair e'en, Maister MacPhail!" she cried, holding out her hand, which the blind man took as if he saw as well as she. "Come awa' but the hoose. Wow! but ye're walcome."

"She thanks your own self, Mistress Partan," said Duncan, as he followed her in; "and her heart will pe thanking you for ta coot welcome; and it will pe a long time since she'll saw you howefer."

"Noo, noo!" exclaimed Meg, stopping in the middle of her little kitchen, as she was getting a chair for the old man, and turning upon him to revive on the first possible chance what had been a standing quarrel between them, "what *can* be the rizon 'at gars ane like you, 'at never saw man or wuman i' yer lang life, the verra meenute ye open yer mou', say it's lang sin' ye *saw* me. A mensefu' body like you, Maister MacPhail, sud speyk mair to the p'int."

"Ton't you'll pe preaking her heart with ta one hand while you'll pe clapping her head with

ta other," said the piper. "Ton't pe taking her into your house to pe telling her she can't see. Is it that old Tuncan is not a man as much as any woman in ta world, tat you'll pe telling her she can't see? I tell you she *can* see, and more tan you'll pe think. And I will tell it to you, tere iss a pape in this house, and tere wass pe none when Tuncan she'll co away."

"We a' ken ye ha'e the *second* sicht," said Mrs. Findlay, who had not expected such a reply; "an' it was only o' the first I spak. Haith! it wad be ill set o' me to anger ye the moment ye come back to yer ain. Sit ye doon there by the chimla-neuk, till I mask ye a dish o' tay. Or maybe ye wad prefar a drap o' parritch an' milk? It's no muckle I ha'e to offer ye, but ye cudna be mair walcome."

As easily appeased as irritated, the old man sat down with a grateful, placid look, and while the tea was *drawing*, Mrs. Findlay, by judicious questions, gathered from him the story of his adventures.

Unable to rise above the disappointment and chagrin of finding that the boy he loved as his own soul, and had brought up as his own son

was actually the child of a Campbell woman, one of the race to which belonged the murderer of his people in Glencoe, and which therefore he hated with an absolute passion of hatred, unable also to endure the terrible schism in his being occasioned by the conflict between horror at the Campbell blood, and ineffaceable affection for the youth in whose veins it ran, and who so fully deserved all the love he had lavished upon him, he had concluded to rid himself of all the associations of place and people and event now grown so painful, to make his way back to his native Glencoe, and there endure his humiliation as best he might, beheld of the mountains which had beheld the ruin of his race. He would end the few and miserable days of his pilgrimage amid the rushing of the old torrents, and the calling of the old winds about the crags and precipices that had hung over his darksome yet blessed childhood. These were still his friends. But he had not gone many days' journey before a farmer found him on the road insensible, and took him home. As he recovered, his longing after his boy Malcolm grew, until it rose to agony, but he fought with his heart, and be-

lieved he had overcome it. The boy was a good boy, he said to himself; the boy had been to him as the son of his own heart; there was no fault to find with him or in him; he was as brave as he was kind, as sincere as he was clever, as strong as he was gentle; he could play on the bagpipes, and very nearly talk Gaelic; but his mother was a Campbell, and for that there was no help. To be on loving terms with one in whose veins ran a single drop of the black pollution was a thing no MacDhonuill must dream of. He had lived a man of honour, and he would die a man of honour, hating the Campbells to their last generation. How should the bard of his clan ever talk to his own soul if he knew himself false to the name of his fathers! Hard fate for him! As if it were not enough that he had been doomed to save and rear a child of the brood abominable, he was yet further doomed, worst fate of all, to love the evil thing! he could not tear the lovely youth from his heart. But he could go further and further from him.

As soon as he was able, he resumed his journey westward, and at length reached his

native glen, the wildest spot in all the island. There he found indeed the rush of the torrents and the call of the winds unchanged, but when his soul cried out in its agonies, they went on with the same song that had soothed his childhood; for the heart of the suffering man they had no response. Days passed before he came upon a creature who remembered him; for more than twenty years were gone, and a new generation had come up since he forsook the glen. Worst of all, the clan-spirit was dying out, the family type of government all but extinct, the patriarchal vanishing in a low form of the feudal, itself already in abject decay. The hour of the Celt was gone by, and the long-wandering raven, returning at last, found the ark it had left afloat on the waters, dry and deserted and rotting to dust. There was not even a cottage in which he could hide his head. The one he had forsaken when cruelty and crime drove him out, had fallen to ruins, and now there was nothing of it left but its foundations. The people of the inn at the mouth of the valley did their best for him, but he learned by accident that they had Campbell connections,

and, rising that instant, walked from it for ever. He wandered about for a time, playing his pipes, and everywhere hospitably treated; but at length his heart could endure its hunger no more: he *must* see his boy, or die. He walked therefore straight to the cottage of his quarrelsome but true friend, Mistress Partan—to learn that his benefactor, the marquis, was dead, and Malcolm gone. But here alone could he hope ever to see him again, and the same night he sought his cottage in the grounds of Lossie House, never doubting his right to re-occupy it. But the door was locked, and he could find no entrance. He went to the House, and there was referred to the factor. But when he knocked at his door, and requested the key of the cottage, Mr. Crathie, who was in the middle of his third tumbler, came raging out of his dining-room, cursed him for an old highland goat, and heaped insults on him and his grandson indiscriminately. It was well he kept the door between him and the old man, for otherwise he would never have finished the said third tumbler. That door carried in it thenceforth the marks of every weapon that Duncan bore, and

indeed the half of his sgian dhu was the next morning found sticking in it, like the sting which the bee is doomed to leave behind her. He returned to Mistress Partan white and trembling, in a mountainous rage with "ta low-pred hount of a factor." Her sympathy was enthusiastic, for they shared a common wrath. And now came the tale of the factor's cruelty to the fishers, his hatred of Malcolm, and his general wildness of behaviour. The piper vowed to shed the last drop of his blood in defence of his Mistress Partan. But when, to strengthen the force of his asseveration, he drew the dangerous-looking dirk from its sheath, she threw herself upon him, wrenched it from his hand, and testified that "fules sudna hae chappin-sticks, nor yet teylors guns." It was days before Duncan discovered where she had hidden it. But not the less heartily did she insist on his taking up his abode with her; and the very next day he resumed his old profession of lamp-cleaner to the community.

When Miss Horn heard that he had come and where he was, old feud with Meg Partan rendering it imprudent to call upon him, she

watched for him in the street, and welcomed him home, assuring him that, if ever he should wish to change his quarters, her house was at his service.

"I'm nae Cam'ell, ye ken, Duncan," she concluded, "an' what an auld wuman like mysel' can du to mak ye coamfortable sall no fail, an' that I promise ye."

The old man thanked her with the perfect courtesy of the Celt, confessed that he was not altogether at ease where he was, but said he must not hurt the feelings of Mistress Partan, "for she'll not pe a paad womans," he added, "but her house will pe aalways in ta flames, howefer."

So he remained where he was, and the general heart of the Seaton was not a little revived by the return of one whose presence reminded them of a better time, when no such cloud as now threatened them heaved its ragged sides above their horizon.

The factor was foolish enough to attempt inducing Meg to send her guest away.

"We want no landloupin' knaves, old or young, about Lossie," he said. "If the place is

no keepit dacent, we'll never get the young marchioness to come near's again."

"'Deed, factor," returned Meg, enhancing the force of her utterance by a composure marvellous from its rarity, "the first thing to mak' the place—I'll no say dacent, sae lang there's sae mony claverin' wives in't, but mair dacent nor it has been for the last ten year, wad be to sen' factors back whaur they cam' frae."

"And whaur may that be?" asked Mr. Crathie.

"That's mair nor I richtly can say," answered Meg Partan, "but auld-farand fouk threepit it was somewhaur 'ithin the swing o' Sawtan's tail."

The reply on the factor's lips as he left the house, tended to justify the rude sarcasm.

CHAPTER II.

MID-OCEAN.

THERE came a breath of something in the east. It was neither wind nor warmth. It was light before it is light to the eyes of men. Slowly and softly it grew, until, like the dawning soul in the face of one who lies in a faint, the life of light came back to the world, and at last the whole huge hollow hemisphere of rushing sea and cloud-flecked sky lay like a great empty heart, waiting, in conscious glory of the light, for the central glory, the coming lord of day. And in the whole crystaline hollow, gleaming and flowing with delight, yet waiting for more, the Psyche was the one only lonely life-bearing thing—the one cloudy germ-spot afloat in the bosom of the great roc-egg of sea and sky, whose sheltering nest was the universe with its walls of flame.

Florimel woke, rose, went on deck, and for a moment was fresh born. It was a fore-scent—even this could not be called a fore-taste, of the kingdom of heaven ; but Florimel never thought of the kingdom of heaven, the ideal of her own existence. She could however half appreciate this earthly outbreak of its glory, this incarnation of truth invisible. Round her, like a thousand doves, clamoured with greeting wings the joyous sea-wind. Up came a thousand dancing billows, to shout their good morning. Like a petted animal, importunate for play, the breeze tossed her hair and dragged at her fluttering garments, then rushed into the Psyche's sails, swelled them yet deeper, and sent her dancing over the dancers. The sun peered up like a mother waking and looking out on her frolicking children. Black shadows fell from sail to sail, slipping and shifting, and one long shadow of the Psyche herself shot over the world to the very gates of the west, but held her not, for she danced and leaned and flew as if she had but just begun her corantolavolta fresh with the morning, and had not been dancing all the livelong night over the same floor. Lively as any

new-born butterfly, not like a butterfly's, flitting and hovering, was her flight, for still, like one that longed, she sped and strained and flew. The joy of bare life swelled in Florimel's bosom. She looked up, she looked around, she breathed deep. The cloudy anger that had rushed upon her like a watching tiger the moment she waked, fell back, and left her soul a clear mirror to reflect God's dream of a world. She turned, and saw Malcolm at the tiller, and the cloudy wrath sprang upon her. He stood composed and clear and cool as the morning, without sign of doubt or conscience of wrong, now peeping into the binnacle, now glancing at the sunny sails, where swayed across and back the dark shadows of the rigging, as the cutter leaned and rose, like a child running and staggering over the multitudinous and unstable hillocks. She turned from him.

"Good morning, my lady! What a good morning it is!" As in all his address to his mistress, the freedom of the words did not infect the tone; that was resonant of essential honour. "Strange to think," he went on, "that the sun himself there is only a great fire, and knows

nothing about it! There must be a sun to that sun, or the whole thing is a vain show. There must be one to whom each is itself, yet the all makes a whole—one who is at once both centre and circumference to all."

Florimel cast on him a scornful look. For not merely was he talking his usual unintelligible rubbish of poetry, but he had the impertinence to speak as if he had done nothing amiss, and she had no ground for being offended with him. She made him no answer. A cloud came over Malcolm's face; and until she went again below, he gave his attention to his steering.

In the meantime Rose, who happily had turned out as good a sailor as her new mistress, had tidied the little cabin; and Florimel found, if not quite such a sumptuous breakfast laid as at Portland Place, yet a far better appetite than usual to meet what there was; and when she had finished, her temper was better, and she was inclined to think less indignantly of Malcolm's share in causing her so great a pleasure. She was not yet quite spoiled. She was still such a lover of the visible world and of personal freedom, that the thought of returning to London

and its leaden-footed hours, would now have been unendurable. At this moment she could have imagined no better thing than thus to go tearing through the water—home to her home. For although she had spent little of her life at Lossie House, she could not but prefer it unspeakably to the schools in which she had passed almost the whole of the preceding portion of it. There was little or nothing in the affair she could have wished otherwise except its origin. She was mischievous enough to enjoy even the thought of the consternation it would cause at Portland Place. She did not realize all its awkwardness. A letter to Lady Bellair when she reached home would, she said to herself, set everything right; and if Malcolm had now repented and put about, she would instantly have ordered him to hold on for Lossie. But it was mortifying that she should have come at the will of Malcolm, and not by her own—worse than mortifying that perhaps she would have to say so. If she were going to say so, she must turn him away as soon as she arrived. There was no help for it. She dared not keep him after that in the face of society.

But she might take the bold, and perhaps a little dangerous measure of adopting the flight as altogether her own madcap idea. Her thoughts went floundering in the bog of expediency, until she was tired, and declined from thought to reverie. Then dawning out of the dreamland of her past, appeared the image of Lenorme. Pure pleasure, glorious delight, such as she now felt, could not long possess her mind, without raising in its charmed circle the vision of the only man except her father whom she had ever—something like loved. Her behaviour to him had not yet roused in her shame or sorrow or sense of wrong. She had driven him from her; she was ashamed of her relation to him; she had caused him bitter suffering; she had all but promised to marry another man; yet she had not the slightest wish for that man's company there and then: with no one of her acquaintance but Lenorme could she have shared this conscious splendour of life. "Would to God he had been born a gentleman instead of a painter!" she said to herself, when her imagination had brought him from the past, and set him in the midst of the present.

"Rank," she said, "I am above caring about. In that he might be ever so far my inferior, and welcome, if only he had been of a good family, a gentleman born!" She was generosity, magnanimity itself, in her own eyes! Yet he was of far better family than she knew, for she had never taken the trouble to inquire into his history. And now she was so much easier in her mind since she had so cruelly broken with him, that she felt positively virtuous because she had done it, and he was not at that moment by her side. And yet if he had that moment stepped from behind the mainsail, she would in all probability have thrown herself into his arms.

The day passed on; Florimel grew tired and went to sleep; woke and had her dinner; took a volume of the Arabian Nights, and read herself again to sleep; woke again; went on deck; saw the sun growing weary in the west. And still the unwearied wind blew, and still the Psyche danced on, as unwearied as the wind.

The sun-set was rather an assumption than a decease, a reception of him out of their sight into an eternity of gold and crimson; and when

he was gone, and the gorgeous bliss had withered into a dove-hued grief, then the cool, soft twilight, thoughtful of the past and its love, crept out of the western caves over the breast of the water, and filled the dome, and made of itself a great lens royal, through which the stars and their motions were visible; and the ghost of Aurora with both hands lifted her shroud above her head, and made a dawn for the moon on the verge of the watery horizon—a dawn as of the past, the hour of inverted hope. Not a word all day had been uttered between Malcolm and his mistress: when the moon appeared, with the waves sweeping up against her face, he approached Florimel where she sat in the stern. Davy was steering.

"Will your ladyship come forward and see how the Psyche goes?" he said. "At the stern, you can see only the passive part of her motion. It is quite another thing to see the will of her at work in the bows."

At first she was going to refuse; but she changed her mind, or her mind changed her: she was not much more of a living and acting creature yet than the Psyche herself. She said

nothing, but rose, and permitted Malcolm to help her forward.

It was the moon's turn now to be level with the water, and as Florimel stood on the larboard side, leaning over and gazing down, she saw her shine through the little feather of spray the cutwater sent curling up before it, and turn it into pearls and semiopals.

"She's got a bone in her mouth, you see, my lady," said old Travers.

"Go aft till I call you, Travers," said Malcolm.

Rose was in Florimel's cabin, and they were now quite alone.

"My lady," said Malcolm, "I can't bear to have you angry with me."

"Then you ought not to deserve it," returned Florimel.

"My lady, if you knew all, you would not say I deserved it."

"Tell me all then, and let me judge."

"I cannot tell you all yet, but I will tell you something which may perhaps incline you to feel merciful. Did your ladyship ever think

what could make me so much attached to your father?"

"No indeed. I never saw anything peculiar in it. Even now-a-days there are servants to be found who love their masters. It seems to me natural enough. Besides he was very kind to you."

"It was natural indeed, my lady—more natural than you think. Kind to me he was, and that was natural too."

"Natural to him, no doubt, for he was kind to everybody."

"My grandfather told you something of my early history—did he not, my lady?"

"Yes—at least I think I remember his doing so."

"Will you recall it, and see whether it suggests nothing."

But Florimel could remember nothing in particular, she said. She had in truth, for as much as she was interested at the time, forgotten almost everything of the story.

"I really cannot think what you mean," she added. "If you are going to be mysterious, I

shall resume my place by the tiller. Travers is deaf, and Davy is dumb: I prefer either."

"My lady," said Malcolm, "your father knew my mother, and persuaded her that he loved her."

Florimel drew herself up, and would have looked him to ashes if wrath could burn. Malcolm saw he must come to the point at once or the parley would cease.

"My lady," he said, "your father was my father too. I am a son of the Marquis of Lossie, and your brother—your ladyship's half-brother, that is."

She looked a little stunned. The gleam died out of her eyes, and the glow out of her cheek. She turned and leaned over the bulwark. He said no more, but stood watching her. She raised herself suddenly, looked at him, and said,

"Do I understand you?"

"I am your brother," Malcolm repeated.

She made a step forward, and held out her hand. He took the little thing in his great grasp tenderly. Her lip trembled. She gazed at him for an instant, full in the face, with a womanly, believing expression.

"My poor Malcolm!" she said, "I am sorry for you."

She withdrew her hand, and again leaned over the bulwark. Her heart was softened towards her groom-brother, and for a moment it seemed to her that some wrong had been done. Why should the one be a marchioness and the other a groom? Then came the thought that now all was explained. Every peculiarity of the young man, every gift extraordinary of body, mind, or spirit, his strength, his beauty, his courage, and honesty, his simplicity, nobleness, and affection, yes, even what in *him* was mere doggedness and presumption, all, everything explained itself to Florimel in the fact that the incomprehensible fisherman-groom, that talked like a parson, was the son of her father. She never thought of the woman that was his mother, and what share she might happen to have in the phenomenon—thought only of her father, and a little pitifully of the half-honour and more than half-disgrace infolding the very existence of her attendant. As usual her thoughts were confused. The one moment the poor fellow seemed to exist only on sufferance,

having no right to be there at all, for as fine a fellow as he was; the next she thought how immeasurably he was indebted to the family of the Colonsays. Then arose the remembrance of his arrogance and presumption in assuming on such a ground something more than guardianship—absolute tyranny over her, and with the thought pride and injury at once got the upper hand. Was *she* to be dictated to by a low-born, low-bred fellow like that—a fellow whose hands were harder than any leather, not with doing things for his amusement, but actually with earning his daily bread—one that used to smell so of fish—on the ground of a right too—and such a right as ought to exclude him for ever from her presence!—She turned to him again.

"How long have you known this—this—painful—indeed I must confess to finding it an awkward and embarrassing fact? I presume you *do* know it?" she said, coldly and searchingly.

"My father confessed it on his death-bed."

"Confessed!" echoed Florimel's pride, but she restrained her tongue.

"It explains much," she said, with a sort of judicial relief. "There has been a great change upon you since then. Mind I only say *explains*. It could never justify such behaviour as yours —no, not if you had been my true brother. There is some excuse, I daresay, to be made for your ignorance and inexperience. No doubt the discovery turned your head. Still I am at a loss to understand how you could imagine that sort of—of—that sort of thing gave you any right over me!"

"Love has its rights, my lady," said Malcolm.

Again her eyes flashed and her cheek flushed.

"I cannot permit you to talk so to me. You must not fancy such things are looked upon in our position with the same indifference as in yours. You must not flatter yourself that you can be allowed to cherish the same feelings towards me as if—as if—you were really my brother. I am sorry for you, Malcolm, as I said already; but you have altogether missed your mark if you think that can alter facts, or shelter you from the consequences of presumption."

Again she turned away. Malcolm's heart was sore for her. How grievously she had sunk from the Lady Florimel of the old days! It was all from being so constantly with that wretched woman and her vile nephew. Had he been able to foresee such a rapid declension, he would have taken her away long ago, and let come of her feelings what might. He had been too careful over them.

"Indeed," Florimel resumed, but this time without turning towards him, "I do not see how things can possibly, after what you have told me, remain as they are. I should not feel at all comfortable in having one about me who would be constantly supposing he had rights, and reflecting on my father for fancied injustice, and whom I fear nothing could prevent from taking liberties. It is very awkward indeed, Malcolm—very awkward! But it is your own fault that you are so changed, and I must say I should not have expected it of you. I should have thought you had more good sense and regard for me. If I were to tell the world why I wanted to keep you, people would but shrug their shoulders and tell me to get rid of you;

and if I said nothing, there would always be something coming up that required explanation. Besides, you would for ever be trying to convert me to one or other of your foolish notions. I hardly know what to do. I will consult—my friends on the subject. And yet I would rather they knew nothing of it. My father you see——" She paused. "If you had been my real brother it would have been different."

"I am your real brother, my lady, and I have tried to behave like one ever since I knew it."

"Yes; you have been troublesome. I have always understood that brothers were troublesome. I am told they are given to taking upon them the charge of their sisters' conduct. But I would not have even you think me heartless. If you had been a *real* brother, of course I should have treated you differently."

"I don't doubt it, my lady, for everything would have been different then. I should have been the Marquis of Lossie, and you would have been Lady Florimel Colonsay. But it would have made little difference in one thing:

I could not have loved you better than I do now—if only you would believe it, my lady!"

The emotion of Malcolm, evident in his voice as he said this, seemed to touch her a little.

"I believe it, my poor Malcolm," she returned, "quite as much as I want, or as it is pleasant to believe it. I think you would do a great deal for me, Malcolm. But then you are so rude! take things into your own hands, and do things for me I don't want done! You *will* judge, not only for yourself, but for me! How *can* a man of your training and position judge for a lady of mine! Don't you see the absurdity of it? At times it has been very awkward indeed. Perhaps when I am married it might be arranged; but I don't know." Here Malcolm ground his teeth, but was otherwise irresponsive as block of stone. "How would a gamekeeper's place suit you. That is a half-gentlemanly kind of post. I will speak to the factor, and see what can be done.—But on the whole I *think*, Malcolm, it will be better you should go. I am *very* sorry. I wish you had not told me. It is very painful to me. You *should* not have told me. These things are not

intended to be talked of.—Suppose you were to marry—say——"

She stopped abruptly, and it was well both for herself and Malcolm that she caught back the name that was on her lips.

The poor girl must not be judged as if she had been more than a girl, or other than one with every disadvantage of evil training. Had she been four or five years older, she might have been a good deal worse, and have seemed better, for she would have kept much of what she had now said to herself, and would perhaps have treated her brother more kindly while she cared even less for him.

"What will you do with Kelpie, my lady?" asked Malcolm quietly.

"There it is, you see!" she returned. "So awkward! If you had not told me, things could have gone on as before, and for your sake I could have pretended I came this voyage of my own will and pleasure. Now, I don't know what I can do—except indeed you—let me see—if you were to hold your tongue, and tell nobody what you have just told me—I don't know but you might stay till you got her so far

trained that another man could manage her. I might even be able to ride her myself.—Will you promise?"

"I will promise not to let the fact come out so long as I am in your service, my lady."

"After all that has passed, I think you might promise me a little more! But I will not press it."

"May I ask what it is, my lady?"

"I am not going to press it, for I do not choose to make a favour of it. Still, I do not see that it would be such a mighty favour to ask —of one who owes respect at least to the house of Lossie. But I will not ask. I will only *suggest*, Malcolm, that you should leave this part of the country—say this country altogether, and go to America, or New South Wales, or the Cape of Good Hope. If you will take the hint, and promise never to speak a word of this unfortunate —yes, I must be honest, and allow there is a *sort* of relationship between us; but if you will keep it secret, I will take care that something is done for you—something, I mean, more than you could have any right to expect. And mind, I am not asking you to conceal anything that

could reflect honour upon you or dishonour upon us."

"I cannot, my lady."

"I scarcely thought you would. Only you hold such grand ideas about self-denial, that I thought it might be agreeable to you to have an opportunity of exercising the virtue at a small expense and a great advantage."

Malcolm was miserable. Who could have dreamed to find in her such a woman of the world! He must break off the hopeless interview.

"Then, my lady," he said, "I suppose I am to give my chief attention to Kelpie, and things are to be as they have been."

"For the present. And as to this last piece of presumption, I will so far forgive you as to take the proceeding on myself—mainly because it would have been my very choice had you submitted it to me. There is nothing I should have preferred to a sea-voyage and returning to Lossie at this time of the year. But you also must be silent on your insufferable share in the business. And for the other matter, the least arrogance or assumption I shall consider

to absolve me at once from all obligation towards you of any sort. Such relationships are *never* acknowledged."

"Thank you—sister," said Malcolm—a last forlorn experiment; and as he said the word he looked lovingly in her eyes.

She drew herself up like the princess Lucifera, "with loftie eyes, halfe loth to looke so lowe," and said, cold as ice,

"If once I hear that word on your lips again, as between you and me, Malcolm, I shall that very moment discharge you from my service, as for a misdemeanour. You have *no* claim upon me, and the world will not blame me."

"Certainly not, my lady. I beg your pardon. But there is one who perhaps will blame you a little."

"I know what you mean; but I don't pretend to any of your religious motives. When I do, then you may bring them to bear upon me."

"I was not so foolish as you think me, my lady. I merely imagined you might be as far on as a Chinaman," said Malcolm, with a poor attempt at a smile.

"What insolence do you intend now?"

"The Chinese, my lady, pay the highest respect to their departed parents. When I said there was one who would blame you a little, I meant your father."

He touched his cap, and withdrew.

"Send Rose to me," Florimel called after him, and presently with her went down to the cabin.

And still the Psyche soul-like flew. Her earthly birth held her to the earth, but the ocean upbore her, and the breath of God drove her on. Little thought Florimel to what she hurried her! A queen in her own self-sufficiency and condescension, she could not suspect how little of real queendom, noble and self-sustaining, there was in her being; for not a soul of man or woman whose every atom leans not upon its father-fact in God, can sustain itself when the outer wall of things begins to tumble towards the centre, crushing it in on every side.

During the voyage no further allusion was made by either to what had passed. By the next morning Florimel had yet again recovered

her temper, and, nothing fresh occurring to irritate her, kept it and was kind.

Malcolm was only too glad to accept whatever parings of heart she might offer.

By the time their flight was over, Florimel almost felt as if it had indeed been undertaken at her own desire and motion, and was quite prepared to assert that such was the fact.

CHAPTER III.

THE SHORE.

IT was two days after the longest day of the year, when there is no night in those regions, only a long twilight, in which many dream and do not know it. There had been a week of variable weather, with sudden changes of wind to east and north, and round again by south to west, and then there had been a calm for several days. But now the little wind there was blew from the north-east; and the fervour of June was rendered more delicious by the films of flavouring cold that floated through the mass of heat. All Portlossie more and less, the Seaton especially, was in a state of excitement, for its little neighbour, Scaurnose, was more excited still. There the man most threatened, and with greatest injustice, was the only one

calm amongst the men, and amongst the women his wife was the only one that was calmer than he. Blue Peter was resolved to abide the stroke of wrong, and not resist the powers that were, believing them in some true sense, which he found it hard to understand when he thought of the factor as the individual instance, ordained of God. He had a dim perception too that it was better that one, and that one he, should suffer, than that order should be destroyed and law defied. Suffering, he might still in patience possess his soul, and all be well with him; but what would become of the country if everyone wronged were to take the law into his own hands? Thousands more would be wronged by the lawless in a week than by unjust powers in a year. But the young men were determined to pursue their plan of resistance, and those of the older and soberer who saw the uselessness of it, gave themselves little trouble to change the minds of the rest. Peter, although he knew they were not for peace, neither inquired what their purpose might be, nor allowed any conjecture or suspicion concerning it to influence him in his preparations

for departure. Not that he had found a new home. Indeed he had not heartily set about searching for one; in part because, unconsciously to himself, he was buoyed up by the hope he read so clear in the face of his more trusting wife—that Malcolm would come to deliver them. His plan was to leave her and his children with certain friends at Port Gordon; he would not hear of going to the Partans to bring them into trouble. He would himself set out immediately after for the Lewis fishing.

Few had gone to the Hebrides that year from Scaurnose or Portlossie. The magnitude of the events that were about to take place, yet more the excitement and interest they occasioned, kept the most of the men at home—to content themselves with fishing the waters of the Moray Frith. And they had notable success. But what was success with such a tyrant over them as the factor, threatening to harry their nests, and turn the sea-birds and their young out of their heritage of rock and sand and shingle? They could not keep house on the waves, any more than the gulls! Those who still held their religious assemblies in the

cave called the Baillies' Barn, met often, read and sang the comminatory psalms more than any others, and prayed much against the wiles and force of their enemies both temporal and spiritual; while Mr. Crathie went every Sunday to church, grew redder in the nose, and hotter in the temper.

Miss Horn was growing more and more uncomfortable concerning events, and dissatisfied with Malcolm. She had not for some time heard from him, and here was his most important duty unattended to—she would not yet say neglected—the well-being of his tenantry, namely, left in the hands of an unsympathetic, self-important underling, who was fast losing all the good sense he had once possessed! Was the life and history of all these brave fishermen and their wives and children to be postponed to the pampered feelings of one girl, and that because she was what she had no right to be, his half-sister forsooth? said Miss Horn to herself—that bosom friend to whom some people, and those not the worst, say oftener what they do not mean than what they do. She had written to him within the last month a very hot letter in-

deed, which had afforded no end of amusement to Mrs. Catanach, as she sat in his old lodging over the curiosity-shop, but, I need hardly say, had not reached Malcolm; and now there was but one night, and the best of all the fisher-families would have nowhere to lie down! Miss Horn, with Joseph Mair, thought she did well to be angry with Malcolm.

The blind piper had been very restless all day. Questioned again and again by Meg Partan as to what was amiss with him, he had always returned her odd and evasive answers. Every few minutes he got up—even from cleaning her lamp—to go to the shore. He had but to cross the threshold, and take a few steps through the *close*, to reach the road that ran along the sea-front of the village: on the one side were the cottages, scattered and huddled, on the other the shore and ocean wide outstretched. He would walk straight across this road until he felt the sand under his feet; there stand for a few moments facing the sea, and, with nostrils distended, breathing deep breaths of the air from the north-east; then turn and walk back to Meg Partan's kitchen, to resume

his ministration of light. These his sallies were so frequent, and his absences so short, that a more serene temper than hers might have been fretted by them. But there was something about his look and behaviour that, while it perplexed, restrained her; and instead of breaking out upon him, she eyed him curiously. She had found that it would not do to stare at him. The instant she began to do so, he began to fidget, and turned his back to her. It had made her lose her temper for a moment, and declare aloud as her conviction that he was after all an impostor, and saw as well as any of them.

"She has told you so, Mistress Partan, one hundred thousand times," replied Duncan, with an odd smile; "and perhaps she will pe see a little petter as any of you, no matter."

Thereupon she murmured to herself, "The cratur 'ill be seein' something!" and with mingled awe and curiosity sought to lay restraint upon her unwelcome observation of him.

Thus it went on the whole day, and as the evening approached, he grew still more excited. The sun went down, and the twilight began; and, as the twilight deepened, still his excite-

ment grew. Straightway it seemed as if the whole Seaton had come to share in it. Men and women were all out of doors; and, late as it was when the sun set, to judge by the number of red legs and feet that trotted in and out with a little shadowy flash, with a dull patter-pat on earthen floor and hard road, and a scratching and hustling among the pebbles, there could not have been one older than a baby in bed: while of the babies even not a few were awake in their mothers' arms, and out with them on the sea front. The men, with their hands in their trouser-pockets, were lazily smoking pigtail, in short clay pipes with tin covers fastened to the stems by little chains, and some of the women, in short blue petticoats and worsted stockings, were doing the same. Some stood in their doors, talking with neighbours standing in their doors; but these were mostly the elder women: the younger ones—all but Lizzy Findlay—were out in the road. One man half leaned, half sat on the window-sill of Duncan's former abode, and round him were two or three more, and some women, talking about Scaurnose, and the factor, and what the lads would do to-morrow; while

the hush of the sea on the pebbles mingled with their talk, like an unknown tongue of the infinite—never articulating, only suggesting—uttering in song and not in speech—dealing not with thoughts, but with feelings and foretastes. No one listened: what to them was the Infinite with Scaurnose in the near distance! It was now almost as dark as it would be throughout the night if it kept as clear.

Once more there was Duncan, standing as if looking out to sea, and shading his brows with his hand as if to protect his eyes from the glare of the sun, and enable his sight!

"There's the auld piper again!" said one of the group, a young woman. "He's unco fule like to be stan'in that gait (*way*), makin' as gien he cudna weel see for the sun in 's e'en."

"Haud ye yer tongue, lass," rejoined an elderly woman beside her. "There's mair things nor ye ken, as the Beuk says. There's een 'at can see an' een 'at canna, an' een 'at can see twise ower, an' 'een 'at can see steikit what nane can see open."

"Ta poat! ta poat of my chief!" cried the seer. "She is coming like a tream of ta night,

put one tat will not tepart with ta morning."

He spoke as one suppressing a wild joy.

"Wha'll that be, lucky-deddy (*grandfather*)?" inquired, in a respectful voice, the woman who had last spoken, while those within hearing hushed each other and stood in silence. And all the time the ghost of the day was creeping round from west to east to put on its resurrection body, and rise new born. It gleamed faint like a cold ashy fire in the north.

"And who will it pe than her own son, Mistress Reekie?" answered the piper, calling her by her husband's nickname, as was usual, but, as was his sole wont, prefixing the title of respect, where custom would have employed but her Christian name.

"Who'll should it pe put her own Malcolm?" he went on. "I see his poat come round ta Tead Head. She flits over the water like a pale ghost over Morven. But it's ta young and ta strong she is pringing home to Tuncan. O m'anam, beannuich!"

Involuntarily all eyes turned towards the point called the Death's Head, which bounded the bay on the east.

"It's ower dark to see onything," said the man on the window-sill. "There's a bit haar *(fog)* come up."

"Yes," said Duncan, "it'll pe too tark for you who haf cot no eyes only to speak of. Put your'll wait a few, and you'll pe seeing as well as herself. Och, her poy! her poy! O m'anam! Ta Lort pe praised! and she'll tie in peace, for he'll pe only ta one half of him a Cam'ell, and he'll pe safed at last, as sure as there's a heafen to co to and a hell to co from. For ta half tat's not a Cam'ell must pe ta strong half, and it will trag ta other half into heafen—where it will not pe ta welcome, howefer."

As if to get rid of the unpleasant thought that his Malcolm could not enter heaven without taking half a Campbell with him, he turned from the sea and hurried into the house—but only to catch up his pipes and hasten out again, filling the bag as he went. Arrived once more on the verge of the sand, he stood again facing the north-east, and began to blow a pibroch loud and clear.

Meantime the Partan had joined the same group, and they were talking in a low tone

about the piper's claim to the second sight, for, although all were more or less inclined to put faith in Duncan, there was here no such unquestioning belief in the marvel as would have been found on the west coast in every glen from the Mull of Cantyre to Loch Eribol—when suddenly Meg Partan, almost the only one hitherto remaining in the house, appeared rushing from the close.

"Hech, sirs!" she cried, addressing the Seaton in general, "gien the auld man be i' the richt,——"

"She'll pe aal in ta right, Mistress Partan, and tat you'll pe seeing," said Duncan, who, hearing her first cry, had stopped his drone, and played softly, listening.

But Meg went on without heeding him any more than was implied in the repetition of her exordium.

"Gien the auld man be i' the richt, it'll be the marchioness hersel' 'at's h'ard o' the ill duin's o' her factor, an's comin' to see efter her fowk! An' it'll be Ma'colm's duin', an' that'll be seen. But the bonny laad winna ken the state o' the herbour, an' he'll be makin' for the

moo' o't, an' he'll jist rin 's bonny boatie agrun' 'atween the twa piers, an' that'll no be a richt hame-comin' for the leddy o' the lan', an' what's mair, Ma'colm 'ill get the wyte *(blame)* o' 't, an' that'll be seen. Sae ye maun some o' ye to the pier-heid, an' luik oot to gie 'im warnin'."

Her own husband was the first to start, proud of the foresight of his wife.

"Haith, Meg!" he cried, "ye're maist as guid at the lang sicht as the piper himsel'!"

Several followed him, and as they ran, Meg cried after them, giving her orders as if she had been vice-admiral of the red, in a voice shrill enough to pierce the worst gale that ever blew on northern shore.

"Ye'll jist tell the bonnie laad to haud wast a bit an' rin her ashore, an' we'll a' be there an' ha'e her as dry's Noah's ark in a jiffie. Tell her leddyship we'll cairry the boat, an' her intil't, to the tap o' the Boar's Tail, gien she'll gie's her orders.—Winna we, laads?"

"We can but try!" said one. "—But the Fisky 'ill be waur to get a grip o' nor Nancy here," he added, turning suddenly upon the plumpest girl in the place, who stood next him.

She foiled him however of the kiss he had thought to snatch, and turned the laugh from herself upon him, so cleverly avoiding his clutch that he staggered into the road, and nearly fell upon his nose.

By the time the Partan and his companions reached the pier-head, something was dawning in the vague of sea and sky that might be a sloop and standing for the harbour. Thereupon the Partan and Jamie Ladle jumped into a small boat and pulled out. Dubs, who had come from Scaurnose on the business of the conjuration, had stepped into the stern, not to steer but to show a white ensign—somebody's Sunday shirt he had gathered, as they ran, from a furze-bush, where it hung to dry, between the Seaton and the harbour.

"Hoots! ye'll affront the marchioness," objected the Partan.

"Man, i' the gloamin' she'll no ken 't frae buntin'," said Dubs, and at once displayed it, holding it by the two sleeves.

The wind had now fallen to the softest breath, and the little vessel came on slowly. The men rowed hard, shouting, and waving their flag,

and soon heard a hail which none of them could mistake for other than Malcolm's. In a few minutes they were on board, greeting their old friend with jubilation, but talking in a subdued tone, for they perceived by Malcolm's that the cutter bore their lady. Briefly the Partan communicated the state of the harbour, and recommended porting his helm, and running the Fisky ashore about opposite the brass swivel.

"A' the men an' women i' the Seaton," he said, "'ill be there to haul her up."

Malcolm took the helm, gave his orders, and steered further westward.

By this time the people on shore had caught sight of the cutter. They saw her come stealing out of the thin dark, like a thought half thought, and go gliding along the shore like a sea-ghost over the dusky water, faint, uncertain, noiseless, glimmering. It could be no other than the Fisky! Both their lady and their friend Malcolm must be on board, they were certain, for how could the one of them come without the other? and doubtless the marchioness, whom they all remembered as a good-humoured handsome young lady, never shy of

speaking to anybody, had come to deliver them from the hateful red-nosed ogre, her factor! Out at once they all set along the shore to greet her arrival, each running regardless of the rest, so that from the Seaton to the middle of the Boar's Tail there was a long, straggling, broken string of hurrying fisher-folk, men and women, old and young, followed by all the current children, tapering to one or two toddlers, who felt themselves neglected, and wept their way along. The piper, too asthmatic to run, but not too asthmatic to walk and play his bagpipes, delighting the heart of Malcolm, who could not mistake the style, believed he brought up the rear, but was wrong; for the very last came Mistress Findlay and Lizzy, carrying between them their little deal kitchen-table, for her ladyship to step out of the boat upon, and Lizzy's child fast asleep on the top of it.

The foremost ran and ran until they saw that the Psyche had chosen her couch, and was turning her head to the shore, when they stopped and stood ready with greased planks and ropes to draw her up. In a few minutes the whole population was gathered, darkening,

in the June midnight, the yellow sands between the tide and the dune. The Psyche was well manned now, with a crew of six. On she came under full sail till within a few yards of the beach, when, in one and the same moment, every sheet was let go, and she swept softly up like a summer wave, and lay still on the shore. The butterfly was asleep. But ere she came to rest, the instant indeed that her canvas went fluttering away, thirty strong men had rushed into the water and laid hold of the now broken-winged thing. In a few minutes she was high and dry.

Malcolm leaped on the sand just as the Partaness came bustling up with her kitchen-table between her two hands like a tray. She set it down, and across it shook hands with him violently; then caught it up again and deposited it firm on its four legs beneath the cutter's waist.

"Noo, my leddy," said Meg, looking up at the marchioness, "set ye yer bit fut upo' my table, an' we'll think the mair o't efter whan we tak' oor denner aff o' 't."

Florimel thanked her, stepped lightly upon

it, and sprung to the sand, where she was received with words of welcome from many, and shouts which rendered them inaudible from the rest. The men, their bonnets in their hands, and the women courtesying, made a lane for her to pass through, while the young fellows would gladly have begged leave to carry her, could they have extemporised any suitable sort of palanquin or triumphal litter.

Followed by Malcolm, she led the way over the Boar's Tail—nor would accept any help in climbing it—straight for the tunnel: Malcolm had never laid aside the key to the private doors his father had given him while he was yet a servant. They crossed by the embrasure of the brass swivel. That implement had now long been silent, but they had not gone many paces from the bottom of the dune when it went off with a roar. The shouts of the people drowned the startled cry with which Florimel, involuntarily mindful of old and for her better times, turned to Malcolm. She had not looked for such a reception, and was both flattered and touched by it. For a brief space the spirit of her girlhood came back. Possibly, had she

then understood that hope rather than faith or love was at the heart of their enthusiasm, that her tenants looked upon her as their saviour from the factor, and sorely needed the exercise of her sovereignty, she might have better understood her position, and her duty towards them.

Malcolm unlocked the door of the tunnel, and she entered, followed by Rose, who felt as if she were walking in a dream. As he stepped in after them, he was seized from behind, and clasped close in an embrace he knew at once.

"Daddy, daddy!" he said, and turning threw his arms round the piper.

"My poy! my poy! Her nain son Malcolm!" cried the old man in a whisper of intense satisfaction and suppression. "You'll must pe forgifing her for coming pack to you. She cannot help lofing you, and you must forget tat you are a Cam'ell."

Malcolm kissed his cheek, and said, also in a whisper:

"My ain daddy! I ha'e a heap to tell ye, but I maun see my leddy hame first."

"Co, co, this moment co," cried the old man, pushing him away. "To your tuties to my

'leddyship first, and then come to her old daddy."

"I'll be wi' ye in half an hoor or less."

"Coot poy! coot poy! Come to Mistress Partan's."

"Ay, ay, daddy!" said Malcolm, and hurried through the tunnel.

As Florimel approached the ancient dwelling of her race, now her own to do with as she would, her pleasure grew. Whether it was the twilight, or the breach in dulling custom, everything looked strange, the grounds wider, the trees larger, the house grander and more anciently venerable. And all the way the burn sang in the hollow. The spirit of her father seemed to hover about the place, and while the thought that her father's voice would not greet her when she entered the hall, cast a solemn funereal state over her simple return, her heart yet swelled with satisfaction and far-derived pride. All this was hers to work her pleasure with, to confer as she pleased! No thought of her tenants, fishers or farmers, who did their strong part in supporting the ancient dignity of her house, had even an associated share in the bliss of the moment. She had forgotten her

reception already, or regarded it only as the natural homage to such a position and power as hers. As to owing anything in return, the idea had indeed been presented to her when with Clementina and Malcolm she talked over *St. Ronan's Well,* but it had never entered her mind.

The drawing-room and the hall were lighted. Mrs. Courthope was at the door as if she expected her, and Florimel was careful to take everything as a matter of course.

"When will your ladyship please to want me?" asked Malcolm.

"At the usual hour, Malcolm," she answered.

He turned, and ran to the Seaton.

His first business was the accommodation of Travers and Davy, but he found them already housed at the Salmon, with Jamie Ladle teaching Travers to drink toddy. They had left the Psyche snug: she was high above high-water mark, and there were no tramps about; they had furled her sails, locked the companion-door, and left her.

Mrs. Findlay rejoiced over Malcolm as if he had been her own son from a far country; but

the poor piper between politeness and gratitude on the one hand, and the urging of his heart on the other, was sorely tried by her loquacity: he could hardly get in a word. Malcolm perceived his suffering, and, as soon as seemed prudent, proposed that he should walk with him to Miss Horn's, where he was going to sleep, he said, that night. Mrs. Partan snuffed, but held her peace. For the third or fourth time that day, wonderful to tell, she restrained herself!

As soon as they were out of the house, Malcolm assured Duncan, to the old man's great satisfaction, that, had he not found him there, he would, within another month, have set out to roam Scotland in search of him.

Miss Horn had heard of their arrival, and was wandering about the house, unable even to sit down until she saw the marquis. To herself she always called him the marquis; to his face he was always *Ma'colm*. If he had not come, she declared she could not have gone to bed—yet she received him with an edge to her welcome: he had to answer for his behaviour. They sat down, and Duncan told a long sad story; which finished, with the toddy that had

sustained him during the telling, the old man thought it better, for fear of annoying his Mistress Partan, to go home. As it was past one o'clock, they both agreed.

"And if she'll tie to-night, my poy," said Duncan, "she'll pe lie awake in her crave all ta long tarkness, to pe waiting to hear ta voice of your worrts in ta morning. And nefer you mind, Malcolm, she'll has learned to forgife you for peing only ta one half of yourself a cursed Cam'ell."

Miss Horn gave Malcolm a wink, as much as to say, "Let the old man talk. It will hurt no Campbell," and showed him out with much attention. And then at last Malcolm poured forth his whole story, and his heart with it, to Miss Horn, who heard and received it with understanding, and a sympathy which grew ever as she listened. At length she declared herself perfectly satisfied, for not only had he done his best, but she did not see what else he could have done. She hoped, however, that now he would contrive to get this part over as quickly as possible, for which, in the morning, she would, she said, show him cogent reasons.

"I ha'e no feelin's mysel', as ye weel ken, laddie," she remarked in conclusion, "an' I doobt, gien I had been i' your place, I wad na hae luikit to a' sides o' the thing at ance as ye hae dune.—An' it was a man like you 'at sae near lost yer life for the hizzy!" she exclaimed. "I maunna think aboot it, or I winna sleep a wink. But we maun get that deevil Catanach (an' cat eneuch!) hangt.—Weel, my man, ye may haud up yer heid afore the father o' ye, for ye're the first o' the race, I'm thinkin', 'at ever was near-han' deein' for anither. But mak ye a speedy en' till 't noo, laad, an' fa' to the lave o' yer wark. There's a terrible heap to be dune. But I maun haud my tongue the nicht, for I wad fain ye had a guid sleep, an' I'm needin' ane sair mysel', for I'm no sae yoong as I ance was, an' I ha'e been that anxious aboot ye, Ma'colm, 'at though I never hed ony feelin's, yet, noo 'at a' 's gaein' richt, an' ye're a' richt, and like to be richt for ever mair, my heid's just like to split. Gang yer wa's to yer bed, and soon may ye sleep. It's the bed yer bonny mither got a soon' sleep in at last, and muckle was she i' the need o' 't! An' jist tak tent the morn what ye

say whan Jean's i' the room, or maybe o' the ither side o' the door, for she's no mowse. I dinna ken what gars me keep the jaud. I believe 'at gien the verra deevil himsel' had been wi' me sae lang, I wadna ha'e the hert to turn him aboot his ill business. That's what comes o' haein' no feelin's. Ither fowk wad ha'e gotten rid o' her half a score o' years sin' syne."

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRENCH.

MALCOLM had not yet, after all the health-giving of the voyage, entirely recovered from the effects of the ill-compounded potion. Indeed, sometimes the fear crossed his mind that never would he be the same man again, that the slow furnace of the grave alone would destroy the vile deposit left in his house of life. Hence it came that he was weary, and overslept himself the next day—but it was no great matter; he had yet time enough. He swallowed his breakfast as a working man alone can, and set out for Duff Harbour. At Leith, where they had put in for provisions, he had posted a letter to Mr. Soutar, directing him to have Kelpie brought on to his own town, whence he would fetch her himself. The distance was

about ten miles, the hour eight, and he was a good enough walker, although boats and horses had combined to prevent him, he confessed, from getting over-fond of Shanks' mare. To men who delight in the motions of a horse under them, the legs of a man are a tame, dull means of progression, although they too have their superiorities; and one of the disciplines of this world is to have to get out of the saddle and walk afoot. He who can do so with perfect serenity, must very nearly have learned with St. Paul in whatsoever state he is therein to be content. It was the loveliest of mornings, however, to be abroad in upon any terms, and Malcolm hardly needed the resources of one who knew both how to be abased and how to abound—enviable perfection—for the enjoyment of even a long walk. Heaven and earth were just settling to the work of the day after their morning prayer, and the whole face of things yet wore something of that look of expectation which one who mingled the vision of the poet with the faith of the Christian might well imagine to be their upward look of hope after a night of groaning and travailing—

the earnest gaze of the creature waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God; and for himself, though the hardest thing was yet to come, there was a satisfaction in finding himself almost up to his last fence, with the heavy ploughed land through which he had been floundering nearly all behind him—which figure means that he had almost made up his mind what to do.

When he reached the Duff Arms, he walked straight into the yard, where the first thing he saw was a stable boy in the air, hanging on to a twitch on the nose of the rearing Kelpie. In another instant he would have been killed or maimed for life, and Kelpie loose, and scouring the streets of Duff Harbour. When she heard Malcolm's voice and the sound of his running feet, she dropped as if to listen. He flung the boy aside, and caught her halter. Once or twice more she reared, in the vain hope of so ridding herself of the pain that clung to her lip and nose, nor did she, through the mist of her anger and suffering, quite recognize her master in his yacht uniform. But the torture decreasing, she grew able to scent his presence, welcomed him

with her usual glad whinny, and allowed him to do with her as he would.

Having fed her, found Mr. Soutar, and arranged several matters with him, he set out for home.

That was a ride! Kelpie was mad with life. Every available field he jumped her into, and she tore its element of space at least to shreds with her spurning hoofs. But the distance was not great enough to quiet her before they got to hard turnpike and young plantations. He would have entered at the grand gate, but found no one at the lodge, for the factor, to save a little, had dismissed the old keeper. He had therefore to go on, and through the town, where, to the awe-stricken eyes of the population peeping from doors and windows, it seemed as if the terrible horse would carry him right over the roofs of the fisher cottages below, and out to sea. "Eh, but he's a terrible cratur that Ma'colm MacPhail!" said the old wives to each other, for they felt there must be something wicked in him to ride like that. But he turned her aside from the steep hill, and passed along the street that led to the town-gate of the

House.—Whom should he see, as he turned into it, but Mrs. Catanach!—standing on her own doorstep, opposite the descent to the Seaton, shading her eyes with her hand, and looking far out over the water through the green smoke of the village below. As long as he could remember her, it had been her wont to gaze thus; though what she could at such times be looking for, except it were the devil in person, he found it hard to conjecture.

At the sound of his approach she turned; and such an expression crossed her face in a momentary flash ere she disappeared in the house, as added considerably to his knowledge of fallen humanity. Before he reached her door she was out again, tying on a clean white apron as she came, and smiling like a dark pool in sunshine. She dropped him a low courtesy, and looked as if she had been occupying her house for months of his absence. But Malcolm would not meet even cunning with its own weapons, and therefore turned away his head, and took no notice of her. She ground her teeth with the fury of hate, and swore that she would yet disappoint him of his purpose,

whatever it were, in this masquerade of service. Her heart being scarcely of the calibre to comprehend one like Malcolm's, her theories for the interpretation of the mystery were somewhat wild, and altogether of a character unfit to see the light.

The keeper of the town-gate greeted Malcolm, as he let him in, with a pleased old face and words of welcome; but added instantly, as if it was no time for the indulgence of friendship, that it was a terrible business going on at the Nose.

"What is it?" asked Malcolm, in alarm.

"Ye ha'e been ower lang awa', I doobt," answered the man, "to ken hoo the factor—— But, Lord save ye! haud yer tongue," he interjected, looking fearfully around him. "Gien he kenned 'at I said sic a thing, he wad turn me oot o' hoose an' ha'."

"You've said nothing yet," rejoined Malcolm.

"I said *factor*, an' that same 's 'maist eneuch, for he's like a roarin' lion an' a ragin' bear amang the people, an' that sin' ever ye gaed. Bow o' Meal said i' the meetin' the ither nicht 'at he bude to be the verra man, the wickit

ruler propheseed o' sae lang sin' syne i' the beuk o' the Proverbs. Eh! it's an awfu' thing to be foreordeent to oonrichteousness!"

"But you haven't told me what is the matter at Scaurnose," said Malcolm impatiently.

"Ow, it's jist this—at this same's midsimmer-day, an' Blew Peter, honest fallow! he's been for the last three month un'er nottice frae the factor to quit. An' sae, ye see,——"

"To quit!" exclaimed Malcolm. "Sic a thing was never h'ard tell o'!"

"Haith! it's h'ard tell o' noo," returned the gatekeeper. "Quittin' 's as plenty as quicken (*couch-grass*). 'Deed there's maist naething ither h'ard tell o' *bit* quittin'; for the full half o' Scaurnose is un'er like nottice for Michaelmas, an' the Lord kens what it 'll a' en' in!"

"But what's it for? Blue Peter's no the man to misbehave himsel'."

"Weel, ye ken mair yersel' nor ony ither as to the warst fau't there is to lay till's chairge; for they say—that is, *some* say, it's a' yer ain wyte, Ma'colm."

"What mean ye, man? Speyk oot," said Malcolm.

"They say it's a' anent the abduckin' o' the markis's boat, 'at you an' him gaed aff wi' thegither."

"That'll hardly haud, seeing the marchioness hersel' cam' hame in her the last nicht."

"Ay, but ye see the decree's gane oot, an' what the factor says is like the laws o' the Medes an' the Prussians, 'at they say's no to be altert; I kenna mysel'."

"Ow weel! gien that be a', I'll see efter that wi' the marchioness."

"Ay, but ye see there's a lot o' the laads there, as I'm tellt, 'at has vooed 'at factor nor factor's man s'all ever set fut in Scaurnose frae this day furth. Gang ye doon to the Seaton, an' see hoo mony o' yer auld freen's ye'll fin' there. Man, they're a' oot to Scaurnose to see the plisky! The factor he's there, I ken, an' some constables wi' 'im—to see 'at his order 's cairried oot. An' the laads they ha'e been fortifeein' the place—as they ca' 't—for the last ook. They've howkit a trenk, they tell me, 'at nane but a hunter on 's horse cud win ower, an' they're postit alang the toon-side o' 't wi' sticks an' stanes, an' boat-heuks, an' guns an' pistils.

An' gien there bena a man or twa killt a'ready,——"

Before he finished his sentence, Kelpie was levelling herself for the sea-gate.

Johnny Bykes was locking it on the other side, in haste to secure his eye-share of what was going on, when he caught sight of Malcolm tearing up. Mindful of the old grudge, also that there was no marquis now to favour his foe, he finished the arrested act of turning the key, drew it from the lock, and to Malcolm's orders, threats, and appeals, returned for all answer that he had no time to attend to *him*, and so left him looking through the bars. Malcolm dashed across the burn, and round the base of the hill on which stood the little wind-god blowing his horn, dismounted, unlocked the door in the wall, got Kelpie through, and was in the saddle again before Johnny was half-way from the gate. When the churl saw him, he trembled, turned, and ran for its shelter again in terror—nor perceived until he reached it, that the insulted groom had gone off like the wind in the opposite direction.

Malcolm soon left the high road and cut

across the fields—over which the wind bore cries and shouts, mingled with laughter and the animal sounds of coarse jeering. When he came nigh the cart-road which led into the village, he saw at the entrance of the street a crowd, and rising from it the well-known shape of the factor on his horse. Nearer the sea, where was another entrance through the back-yards of some cottages, was a smaller crowd. Both were now pretty silent, for the attention of all was fixed on Malcolm's approach. As he drew up Kelpie foaming and prancing, and the group made way for her, he saw a deep wide ditch across the road, on whose opposite side was ranged irregularly the flower of Scaurnose's younger manhood, calmly, even merrily prepared to defend their entrenchment. They had been chaffing the factor, and loudly challenging the constables to come on, when they recognised Malcolm in the distance, and expectancy stayed the rush of their bruising wit. For they regarded him as beyond a doubt come from the marchioness with messages of goodwill. When he rode up, therefore, they raised a great shout, everyone welcoming him by name. But the

factor, who, to judge by appearances, had had his forenoon dram ere he left home, burning with wrath, moved his horse in between Malcolm and the assembled Scaurnoseans on the other side of the ditch. He had self-command enough left, however, to make one attempt at the loftily superior.

"Pray what is your business?" he said, as if he had never seen Malcolm in his life before, "I presume you come with a message."

"I come to beg you, sir, not to go farther with this business. Surely the punishment is already enough!" said Malcolm respectfully.

"Who sends me the message?" asked the factor, his teeth clenched, and his eyes flaming.

"One," answered Malcolm, "who has some influence for justice, and will use it, upon whichever side the justice may lie."

"Go to hell," cried the factor, losing utterly his slender self-command, and raising his whip.

Malcolm took no heed of the gesture, for he was at the moment beyond his reach.

"Mr. Crathie," he said calmly, "you are banishing the best man in the place."

"No doubt! no doubt! seeing he's a crony

of yours," laughed the factor in mighty scorn. "A canting, prayer-meeting rascal!" he added.

"Is that ony waur nor a drucken elyer o' the kirk?" cried Dubs from the other side of the ditch, raising a roar of laughter.

The very purple forsook the factor's face, and left it a corpse-like grey in the fire of his fury.

"Come, come, my men! that's going too far," said Malcolm.

"An' wha ir ye for a fudgie *(truant)* fisher, to gi'e coonsel ohn speired?" shouted Dubs, altogether disappointed in the poor part Malcolm seemed taking. "Haud to the factor there wi' yer coonsel."

"Get out of my way," said Mr. Crathie, still speaking through his set teeth, and came straight upon Malcolm. "Home with you! or —r—r——".

Again he had raised his whip, this time plainly with intent.

"For God's sake, factor, min' the mere," cried Malcolm. "Ribs an' legs an' a' 'ill be to crack, gien ye anger her wi' yer whuppin'."

As he spoke, he drew a little aside that the factor might pass if he pleased. A noise arose

in the smaller crowd, and Malcolm turned to see what it meant: off his guard, he received a stinging cut over the head from the factor's whip. Simultaneously, Kelpie stood up on end, and Malcolm tore the weapon from the treacherous hand.

"If I gave you what you deserve, Mr. Crathie, I should knock you and your horse together into that ditch. A touch of the spur would do it. I am not quite sure that I ought not. A nature like yours takes forbearance for fear."

While he spoke, his mare was ramping and kicking, making a clean sweep all about her. Mr. Crathie's horse turned restive from sympathy, and it was all his rider could do to keep his seat. As soon as he got Kelpie a little quieter, Malcolm drew near and returned him his whip. He snatched it from his outstretched hand, and essayed a second cut at him, which Malcolm rendered powerless by pushing Kelpie close up to him. Then suddenly wheeling, he left him.

On the other side of the trench the fellows were shouting and roaring with laughter.

"Men," cried Malcolm, "you have no right

to stop up this road. I want to go and see Blue Peter."

"Come on," cried one of the young men, emulous of Dubs's humour, and spread out his arms as if to receive Kelpie to his bosom.

"Stand out of the way then," said Malcolm, "I *am* coming."

As he spoke, he took Kelpie a little round, keeping out of the way of the factor, who sat trembling with rage on his still excited animal, and sent her at the trench.

The Deevil's Jock, as they called him, kept jumping, with his arms outspread, from one place to another, as if to receive Kelpie's charge, but when he saw her actually coming, in short quick bounds, straight to the trench, he was seized with terror, and, half-paralysed, slipped as he turned to flee, and rolled into the ditch, just in time to let Kelpie fly over his head. His comrades scampered right and left, and Malcolm, rather disgusted, took no notice of them.

A cart, loaded with their little all, the horse in the shafts, was standing at Peter's door, but nobody was near it. Hardly was Malcolm well

into the close, however, when out rushed Annie, and, heedless of Kelpie's demonstrative repellence, reached up her hands like a child, caught him by the arm, while yet he was busied with his troublesome charge, drew him down towards her, and held him till, in spite of Kelpie, she had kissed him again and again.

"Eh, Ma'colm! eh, my lord!" she said, "ye ha'e saved my faith. I kenned ye wad come!"

"Haud yer tongue, Annie. I mauna be kenned," said Malcolm.

"There's nae danger. They'll tak' it for sweirin'," answered Annie, laughing and crying both at once.

Out next came Blue Peter, his youngest child in his arms.

"Eh, Peter man! I'm blythe to see ye," cried Malcolm. "Gie's a grup o' yer honest han'."

More than even the sight of his face beaming with pleasure, more than that grasp of the hand that would have squeezed the life out of a polecat, was the sound of the mother-tongue from his lips. The cloud of Peter's long distrust broke and vanished, and the sky of his soul was straightway a celestial blue. He snatched his

hand from Malcolm's, walked back into the empty house, ran into the little closet off the kitchen, bolted the door, fell on his knees in the void little sanctuary that had of late been the scene of so many foiled attempts to lift up his heart, and poured out speechless thanksgiving to the God of all grace and consolation, who had given him back his friend, and that in the time of his sore need. So true was his heart in its love, that, giving thanks for his friend, he forgot that friend was the Marquis of Lossie, before whom his enemy was but as a snail in the sun.

When he rose from his knees, and went out again, his face shining and his eyes misty, his wife was on the top of the cart, tying a rope across the cradle.

"Peter," said Malcolm, "ye was quite richt to gang, but I'm glaid they didna lat ye."

"I wad ha'e been half w'y to Port Gordon or noo," said Peter.

"But noo ye'll no gang to Port Gordon," said Malcolm. "Ye'll jist gang to the Salmon for a feow days, till we see hoo things gang."

"I'll du onything ye like, Ma'colm," said

Peter, and went into the house to fetch his bonnet.

In the street arose the cry of a woman, and into the close rushed one of the fisherwives, followed by the factor. He had found a place on the eastern side of the village, where, jumping a low earth wall, he got into a little back yard, and was trampling over its few stocks of kail, and its one dusty miller and double daisy, when the woman to whose cottage it belonged caught sight of him through the window, and running out fell to abusing him in no measured language. He rode at her in his rage, and she fled shrieking into Peter's close, where she took refuge behind the cart, never ceasing her vituperation, but calling him every choice name in her vocabulary. Beside himself with the rage of murdered dignity, he rode up, and struck at her over the corner of the cart, whereupon, from the top of it, Annie Mair ventured to expostulate.

"Hoot, sir! It's no mainners to lat at a wuman like that."

He turned upon her, and gave her a cut on the arm and hand, so stinging that she cried

out, and nearly fell from the cart. Out rushed Peter and flew at the factor, who from his seat of vantage began to ply his whip about his head. But Malcolm, who, when the factor appeared, had moved aside to keep Kelpie out of mischief, and saw only the second of the two assaults, came forward with a scramble and a bound.

"Haud awa, Peter," he cried. "This belangs to me. I ga'e him back 's whup, an' sae I'm accountable.—Mr. Crathie,"—and as he spoke, he edged his mare up to the panting factor, "the man who strikes a woman must be taught that he is a scoundrel, and that office I take. I would do the same if you were the lord of Lossie instead of his factor."

Mr. Crathie, knowing himself now in the wrong, was a little frightened at the set speech, and began to bluster and stammer, but the swift descent of Malcolm's heavy riding whip on his shoulders and back made him voluble in curses. Then began a battle that could not last long with such odds on the side of justice. It was gazed at from the mouth of the close by many spectators, but none dared enter because of the

capering and plunging and kicking of the horses. In less than a minute the factor turned to flee, and spurring out of the court, galloped up the street at full stretch.

"Haud oot o' the gait," cried Malcolm, and rode after him. But more careful of the people. he did not get a good start, and the factor was over the trench and into the fields before he caught him up. Then again the stinging switch buckled about the shoulders of the oppressor, driven with all the force of Malcolm's brawny arm. The factor yelled and cursed and swore, and still Malcolm plied the whip, and still the horses flew—over fields and fences and ditches. At length in the last field, from which they must turn into the high road, the factor groaned out—

"For God's sake, Ma'colm, ha'e mercy!"

The youth's uplifted arm fell by his side. He turned his mare's head, and when the factor turned his, he saw the avenger already halfway back to Scaurnose, and the constables in full flight meeting him.

While Malcolm was thus occupied, his sister was writing to Lady Bellair. She told her

that, having gone out for a sail in her yacht, which she had sent for from Scotland, the desire to see her home had overpowered her to such a degree that of the intended sail she had made a voyage, and here she was, longing just as much now to see Lady Bellair; and if she thought proper to bring a gentleman with her to take care of her, he also should be welcomed for her sake. It was a long way for her to come, she said, and Lady Bellair knew what sort of a place it was; but there was nobody in London now, and if she had nothing more enticing on her tablets, &c., &c. She ended with begging her, if she was mercifully inclined to make her happy with her presence, to bring to her Caley and her hound Demon. She had hardly finished when Malcolm presented himself.

She received him very coldly, and declined to listen to anything about the fishers. She insisted that, being one of their party, he was prejudiced in their favour; and that of course a man of Mr. Crathie's experience must know better than he what ought to be done with such people, in view of protecting her rights, and keeping them in order. She declared that she

was not going to disturb the old way of things to please him; and said that he had now done her all the mischief he could, except, indeed, he were to head the fishers and sack Lossie House. Malcolm found that, by making himself known to her as her brother, he had but given her confidence in speaking her mind to him, and set her free from considerations of personal dignity when she desired to humiliate him. But he was a good deal surprised at the ability with which she set forth and defended her own view of her affairs, for she did not tell him that the Rev. Mr. Cairns had been with her all the morning, flattering her vanity, worshipping her power, and generally instructing her in her own greatness—also putting in a word or two anent his friend Mr. Crathie and his troubles with her ladyship's fisher tenants. She was still, however, so far afraid of her brother—which state of feeling was, perhaps, the main cause of her insulting behaviour to him—that she sat in some dread lest he might chance to see the address of the letter she had been writing.

I may mention here that Lady Bellair accepted the invitation with pleasure for herself

and Liftore, promised to bring Caley, but utterly declined to take charge of Demon, or allow him to be of the party. Thereupon Florimel, who was fond of the animal, and feared much, as he was no favourite, that something would *happen* to him, wrote to Clementina, praying her to visit her in her lovely loneliness—good as The Gloom in its way, though not quite so dark—and to add a hair to the weight of her obligation if she complied, by allowing her deerhound to accompany her. Clementina was the only one, she said, of her friends for whom the animal had ever shown a preference.

Malcolm retired from his sister's presence much depressed, saw Mrs. Courthope, who was kind as ever, and betook himself to his old room, next to that in which his strange history began. There he sat down and wrote urgently to Lenorme, stating that he had an important communication to make, and begging him to start for the north the moment he received the letter. A messenger from Duff Harbour well mounted, he said, would ensure his presence within a couple of hours.

He found the behaviour of his old acquaint-

ances and friends in the Seaton much what he had expected: the few were as cordial as ever, while the many still resented, with a mingling of the jealousy of affection, his forsaking of the old life for a calling they regarded as unworthy of one bred at least if not born a fisherman. A few there were besides who always had been, for reasons perhaps known to themselves, less than friendly. The women were all cordial.

"Sic a mad-like thing," said old Futtocks, who was now the leader of the assembly at the Barn, "to gang scoorin' the cuintry on that mad brute o' a mere! What guid, think ye, can come o' sic like?"

"H'ard ye him ever tell the story aboot Colonsay Castel yon'er?"

"Ay hev I."

"Weel, isna his mere 'at they ca' Kelpie jist the pictur' o' the deil's ain horse 'at lay at the door an' watched, whan he flaw oot an' tuik the wa' wi' 'im?"

"I cudna say till I saw whether the deil himsel' cud gar her lie still."

CHAPTER V.

THE PEACEMAKER.

THE heroes of Scaurnose expected a renewal of the attack, and in greater force, the next day, and made their preparations accordingly, strengthening every weak point around the village. They were put in great heart by Malcolm's espousal of their cause, as they considered his punishment of the factor; but most of them set it down in their wisdom as resulting from the popular condemnation of his previous supineness. It did not therefore add greatly to his influence with them. When he would have prevailed upon them to allow Blue Peter to depart, arguing that they had less right to prevent than the factor had to compel him, they once more turned upon him: what right had he to dictate to them? he did not belong

to Scaurnose! He reasoned with them that the factor, although he had not justice, had law on his side, and could turn out whom he pleased. They said—"Let him try it!" He told them that they had given great provocation, for he knew that the men they had assaulted came surveying for a harbour, and that they ought at least to make some apology for having maltreated them. It was all useless: that was the women's doing, they said; besides they did not believe him; and if what he said was true, what was the thing to them, seeing they were all under notice to leave? Malcolm said that perhaps an apology would be accepted. They told him, if he did not take himself off, they would serve him as he had served the factor. Finding expostulation a failure, therefore, he begged Joseph and Annie to settle themselves again as comfortably as they could, and left them.

Contrary to the expectation of all, however, and considerably to the disappointment of the party of Dubs, Fite Folp, and the rest, the next day was as peaceful as if Scaurnose had been a halycon nest floating on the summer waves; and it was soon reported that, in consequence of the

punishment he had received from Malcolm, the factor was far too ill to be troublesome to any but his wife. This was true, but, severe as his chastisement was, it was not severe enough to have had any such consequences but for his late growing habit of drinking whisky. As it was, fever had followed upon the combination of bodily and mental suffering. But already it had wrought this good in him, that he was far more keenly aware of the brutality of the offence of which he had been guilty than he would otherwise have been all his life through. To his wife, who first learned the reason of Malcolm's treatment of him from his delirious talk in the night, it did not, circumstances considered, appear an enormity, and her indignation with the avenger of it, whom she had all but hated before, was furious. Malcolm, on his part, was greatly concerned to hear the result of his severity. He refrained, however, from calling to inquire, knowing it would be interpreted as an insult, not accepted as a sign of sympathy. He went to the doctor instead—who, to his consternation, looked very serious at first. But when he learned all about the affair, he changed

his view considerably, and condescended to give good hopes of his coming through, even adding that it would lengthen his life by twenty years if it broke him of his habits of whisky-drinking and rage.

And now Malcolm had a little time of leisure, which he put to the best possible use in strengthening his relations with the fishers. For he had nothing to do about the House, except look after Kelpie; and Florimel, as if determined to make him feel that he was less to her than before, much as she used to enjoy seeing him sit his mare, never took him out with her—always Stoat. He resolved therefore, seeing he must yet delay action a while in the hope of the appearance of Lenorme, to go out as in the old days after the herring, both for the sake of splicing, if possible, what strands had been broken between him and the fishers, and of renewing for himself the delights of elemental conflict. With these views, he hired himself to the Partan, whose boat's crew was short-handed. And now, night after night, he revelled in the old pleasure, enhanced by so many months of deprivation. Joy itself seemed embodied in the

wind blowing on him out of the misty infinite while his boat rocked and swung on the waters, hanging between two worlds, that in which the wind blew, and that other dark-swaying mystery whereinto the nets to which it was tied went away down and down, gathering the harvest of the ocean. It was as if nature called up all her motherhood to greet and embrace her long absent son. When it came on to blow hard, as it did once and again during those summer nights, instead of making him feel small and weak in the midst of the storming forces, it gave him a glorious sense of power and unconquerable life. And when his watch was out, and the boat lay quiet, like a horse tethered and asleep in his clover-field, he too would fall asleep with a sense of simultaneously deepening and vanishing delight such as he had not at all in other conditions experienced. Ever since the poison had got into his system, and crept where it yet lay lurking in hidden corners and crannies, a noise at night would on shore startle him awake, and set his heart beating hard; but no loudest sea-noise ever woke him; the stronger the wind flapped its wings

around him, the deeper he slept. When a comrade called him by name, he was up at once and wide awake.

It answered also all his hopes in regard to his companions and the fisher-folk generally. Those who had really known him found the same old Malcolm, and those who had doubted him soon began to see that at least he had lost nothing in courage or skill or goodwill: ere long he was even a greater favourite than before. On his part, he learned to understand far better the nature of his people, as well as the individual characters of them, for his long (but not too long) absence and return enabled him to regard them with unaccustomed, and therefore in some respects more discriminating eyes.

Duncan's former dwelling happening to be then occupied by a lonely woman, Malcolm made arrangements with her to take them both in; so that in relation to his grandfather too something very much like the old life returned for a time—with this difference, that Duncan soon began to check himself as often as the name of his hate, with its accompanying curse, rose to his lips.

The factor continued very ill. He had sunk into a low state, in which his former indulgence was greatly against him. Every night the fever returned, and at length his wife was worn out with watching, and waiting upon him.

And every morning Lizzy Findlay, without fail, called to inquire how Mr. Crathie had spent the night. To the last, while quarrelling with every one of her neighbours with whom he had anything to do, he had continued kind to her, and she was more grateful than one in other trouble than hers could have understood. But she did not know that an element in the origination of his kindness was the belief that it was by Malcolm she had been wronged and forsaken.

Again and again she had offered, in the humblest manner, to ease his wife's burden by sitting with him at night; and at last, finding she could hold up no longer, Mrs. Crathie consented. But even after a week she found herself still unable to resume the watching, and so, night after night, resting at home during a part of the day, Lizzy sat by the sleeping factor, and when he woke ministered to him like a daughter.

Nor did even her mother object, for sickness is a wondrous reconciler. Little did the factor suspect, however, that it was partly for Malcolm's sake she nursed him, anxious to shield the youth from any possible consequences of his righteous vengeance.

While their persecutor lay thus, gradually everything at Scaurnose, and consequently at the Seaton, lapsed into its old way, and the summer of such content as before they had possessed, returned to the fishers. I fear it would have proved hard for some of them, had they made effort in that direction, to join in the prayer, if prayer it may be called, put up in church for him every Sunday. What a fearful canopy the prayers that do not get beyond the atmosphere would make if they turned brown with age! Having so lately seen the factor going about like a maniac, raving at this piece of damage and that heap of dirt, the few fishers present could never help smiling when Mr. Cairns prayed for him as "the servant of God and his church now lying grievously afflicted—persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed;"—having found the fitting phrases he seldom varied them.

Through her sorrow, Lizzy had grown tender, as through her shame she had grown wise. That the factor had been much in the wrong only rendered her anxious sympathy the more eager to serve him. Knowing so well what it was to have done wrong, she was pitiful over him, and her ministrations were none the less devoted that she knew exactly how Malcolm thought and felt about him; for the affair, having taken place in open village and wide field and in the light of mid-day, and having been reported by eye-witnesses many, was everywhere perfectly known, and Malcolm therefore talked of it freely to his friends, amongst them both to Lizzy and her mother.

Sickness sometimes works marvellous changes, and the most marvellous on persons who to the ordinary observer seem the least liable to change. Much apparent steadfastness of nature, however, is but sluggishness, and comes from incapacity to generate change or contribute towards personal growth; and it follows that those whose nature is such can as little prevent or retard any change that has its initiative beyond them. The men who impress the

world as the mightiest are those often who *can* the least—never those who can the most in their natural kingdom; generally those whose frontiers lie openest to the inroads of temptation, whose atmosphere is most subject to moody changes and passionate convulsions, who, while perhaps they can whisper laws to a hemisphere, can utter no decree of smallest potency as to how things shall be within themselves. Place Alexander ille Magnus beside Malcolm's friend Epictetus, ille servorum servus; take his crutch from the slave and set the hero upon his Bucephalus—but set them alone and in a desert: which will prove the great man? which the unchangeable? The question being what the man himself shall or shall not be, shall or shall not feel, shall or shall not recognize as of himself and troubling the motions of his being, Alexander will prove a mere earth-bubble, Epictetus a cavern in which pulses the tide of the eternal and infinite Sea.

But then first, when the false strength of the self-imagined great man is gone, when the want or the sickness has weakened the self-assertion which is so often mistaken for strength of in-

dividuality, when the occupations in which he formerly found a comfortable consciousness of being have lost their interest, his ambitions their glow, and his consolations their colour, when suffering has wasted away those upper strata of his factitious consciousness, and laid bare the lower, simpler, truer deeps, of which he has never known or has forgotten the existence, then there is a hope of his commencing a new and real life. Powers then, even powers within himself, of which he knew nothing, begin to assert themselves, and the man commonly reported to possess a strong will, is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. This factor, this man of business, this despiser of humbug, to whom the scruples of a sensitive conscience were a contempt, would now lie awake in the night and weep. "Ah!" I hear it answered, "but that was the weakness caused by his illness." True; but what then had become of his strength? And was it all weakness? What if this weakness was itself a sign of returning life, not of advancing death—of the dawn of a new and genuine strength! For he wept because, in the

visions of his troubled brain, he saw once more the cottage of his father the shepherd, with all its store of lovely nothings round which the nimbus of sanctity had gathered while he thought not of them; wept over the memory of that moment of delight when his mother kissed him for parting with his willow whistle to the sister who cried for it: he cried now in his turn, after five and fifty years, for not yet had the little fact done with him, not yet had the kiss of his mother lost its power on the man; wept over the sale of the pet-lamb, though he had himself sold thousands of lambs since; wept over even that bush of dusty miller by the door, like the one he trampled under his horse's feet in the little yard at Scaurnose that horrible day. And oh, that nest of wild bees with its combs of honey unspeakable! He used to laugh and sing then: he laughed still sometimes—he could hear how he laughed, and it sounded frightful—but he never sang! Were the tears that honoured such childish memories all of weakness? Was it cause of regret that he had not been wicked enough to have become impregnable to such foolish trifles? Unable to mount a

horse, unable to give an order, not caring even for his toddy, he was left at the mercy of his fundamentals; his childhood came up and claimed him, and he found the childish things he had put away better than the manly things he had adopted. It is one thing for St. Paul and another for Mr. Worldly Wiseman to put away childish things. The ways they do it, and the things they substitute, are both so different! And now first to me, whose weakness it is to love life more than manners, and men more than their portraits, the man begins to grow interesting. Picture the dawn of innocence on a dull, whisky-drinking, commonplace soul, stained by self-indulgence, and distorted by injustice! Unspeakably more interesting and lovely is to me such a dawn than the honey-moon of the most passionate of lovers, except indeed I know them such lovers that their love will outlast all the moons.

"I'm a poor creature, Lizzy," he said, turning his heavy face one midnight towards the girl, as she sat half-dozing, ready to start awake.

"God comfort ye, sir!" said the girl.

"He'll take good care of that!" returned the

factor. "What did I ever do to deserve it?—There's that MacPhail, now—to think of *him*? Didn't I do what man could for him? Didn't I keep him about the place when all the rest were dismissed? Didn't I give him the key of the library, that he might read and improve his mind? And look what comes of it!"

"Ye mean, sir," said Lizzy, quite innocently, "'at that 's the w'y ye ha'e dune wi' God, an' sae he winna heed ye?"

The factor had meant nothing in the least like it. He had merely been talking as the imps of suggestion tossed up. His logic was as sick and helpless as himself. So at that he held his peace—stung in his pride at least—perhaps in his conscience too, only he was not prepared to be rebuked by a girl like her, who had—— Well, he must let it pass: how much better was he himself?

But Lizzy was loyal: she could not hear him speak so of Malcolm and hold her peace as if she agreed in his condemnation.

"Ye'll ken Ma'colm better some day, sir," she said.

"Well, Lizzy," returned the sick man, in a

tone that but for feebleness would have been indignant, "I have heard a good deal of the way women *will* stand up for men that have treated them cruelly, but you to stand up for *him* passes!"

"He's been the best friend I ever had," said Lizzy.

"Girl! how can you sit there, and tell me so to my face?" cried the factor, his voice strengthened by the righteousness of the reproof it bore. "If it were not the dead of the night——"

"I tell ye naething but the trowth, sir," said Lizzy, as the contingent threat died away. "But ye maun lie still or I maun gang for the mistress. Gien ye be the waur the morn, it'll be a' my wyte, 'cause I cudna bide to hear sic things said o' Ma'colm."

"Do ye mean to tell me," persisted her charge, heedless of her expostulation, "that the fellow who brought you to disgrace, and left you with a child you could ill provide for—and I well know never sent you a penny all the time he was away, whatever he may have done now, is the best friend you ever had?"

"Noo God forgi'e ye, Maister Crathie, for threipin' sic a thing!" cried Lizzy, rising as if she would leave him. "Ma'colm MacPhail 's as clear o' ony sin like mine as my wee bairnie itsel'."

"Do ye daur tell *me* he's no the father o' that same, lass?"

"*No*; nor never will be the father o' ony bairn whase mither 's no his wife!" said Lizzy, with burning cheeks, but resolute voice.

The factor, who had risen on his elbow to look her in the face, fell back in silence, and neither of them spoke for what seemed to the watcher a long time. When she ventured to look at him, he was asleep.

He lay in one of those troubled slumbers into which weakness and exhaustion will sometimes pass very suddenly; and in that slumber he had a dream which he never forgot. He thought he had risen from his grave with an awful sound in his ears, and knew he was wanted at the judgment seat. But he did not want to go, therefore crept into the porch of the church, and hoped to be forgotten. But suddenly an angel appeared with a flaming sword and

drove him out of the churchyard away to Scaurnose where the judge was sitting. And as he fled in terror before the angel, he fell, and the angel came and stood over him, and his sword flashed torture into his bones, but he could not and dared not rise. At last, summoning all his strength, he looked up at him, and cried out, "Sir, ha'e mercy, for God's sake." Instantly all the flames drew back into the sword, and the blade dropped, burning like a brand, from the hilt, which the angel threw away.—And lo! it was Malcolm MacPhail, and he was stooping to raise him. With that he awoke, and there was Lizzy looking down on him anxiously.

"What are you looking like that for?" he asked crossly.

She did not like to tell him that she had been alarmed by his dropping asleep; and in her confusion she fell back on the last subject.

"There maun be some mistak, Mr. Crathie," she said. "I wuss ye wad tell me what gars ye hate Ma'colm MacPhail as ye du."

The factor, although he seemed to himself to know well enough, was yet a little puzzled how

to commence his reply; and therewith a process began that presently turned into something with which never in his life before had his inward parts been acquainted—a sort of self-examination to wit. He said to himself, partly in the desire to justify his present dislike—he would not call it hate, as Lizzy did—that he used to get on with the lad well enough, and had never taken offence at his freedoms, making no doubt his manner came of his blood, and he could not help it, being a chip of the old block; but when he ran away with the marquis's boat, and went to the marchioness and told her lies against him—then what could he do but—dislike him?

Arrived at this point, he opened his mouth and gave the substance of what preceded it for answer to Lizzy's question. But she replied at once.

"Nobody 'ill gar me believe, sir, 'at Ma'colm MacPhail ever tellt a lee again' you or onybody. I dinna believe he ever tellt a lee in 's life. Jist ye exem' him weel anent it, sir. An' for the boat, nae doobt it was makin' free to tak it; but ye ken, sir, 'at hoo he was maister

o' the same. It was in his chairge, an' ye ken little aboot boats yersel', or the sailin' o' them, sir."

"But it was me that engaged him again, after all the servants at the House had been dismissed: he was *my* servant."

"That maks the thing luik waur, nae doobt," allowed Lizzy, with something of cunning. "Hoo was't 'at he cam to du 't ava' *(of all, at all)*, sir? Can ye min'?" she pursued.

"I discharged him."

"An' what for, gien I may mak' bold to speir, sir?" she went on.

"For insolence."

"Wad ye tell me hoo he answert ye? Dinna think me meddlin', sir. I'm clear certain there's been some mistak. Ye cudna be sae guid to me, an' be ill to him, ohn some mistak."

It was consoling to the conscience of the factor, in regard of his behaviour to the two women, to hear his own praise for kindness from a woman's lips. He took no offence therefore at her persistent questioning, but told her as well and as truly as he could remember,

with no more than the all but unavoidable exaggeration with which feeling *will* colour fact, the whole passage between Malcolm and himself concerning the sale of Kelpie, and closed with an appeal to the judgment of his listener, in which he confidently anticipated her verdict.

"A most ridic'lous thing! ye can see yersel' as weel 's onybody, Lizzy! An' sic a thing to ca' an honest man like mysel' a hypocrete for! ha! ha! ha! There's no a bairn 'atween John o' Groat's an' the Lan's En' disna ken 'at the seller o' a horse is b'un' to reese *(extol)* him, an' the buyer to tak care o' himsel'. I'll no say it's jist allooable to tell a doonricht lee, but ye may come full nearer till't in horse-dealin', ohn sinned, nor in ony ither kin' o' merchandeze. It's like luve an' war, in baith which, it's weel kenned, a' thing's fair. The saw sud rin—*Luve an' war an' horse-dealin'*.—Divna ye see, Lizzy?"

But Lizzy did not answer, and the factor, hearing a stifled sob, started to his elbow.

"Lie still, sir," said Lizzy. "It's naething. I was only jist thinkin' 'at that wad be the w'y 'at the father o' my bairn rizoned wi' himsel' whan he lee'd to me."

"Hey!" said the astonished factor, and in his turn held his peace, trying to think.

Now Lizzy, for the last few months, had been going to school, the same school with Malcolm, open to all comers, the only school where one is sure to be led in the direction of wisdom, and there she had been learning to some purpose—as plainly appeared before she had done with the factor.

"Whase kirk are ye elder o', Maister Crathie?" she asked presently.

"Ow, the kirk o' Scotlan', of coorse!" answered the patient, in some surprise at her ignorance.

"Ay, ay," returned Lizzy; "but whase aucht (*owning, property*) is 't?"

"Ow, whase but the Redeemer's!"

"An' div ye think, Mr. Crathie, 'at gien Jesus Christ had had a horse to sell, he wad ha'e hidden frae him 'at wad buy, ae hair o' a fau't 'at the beast hed? Wad he no ha'e dune till's neiper as he wad ha'e his neiper du to him?"

"Lassie! lassie! tak care hoo ye even *him* to sic like as hiz (*us*). What wad *he* hae to du wi' horse-flesh?"

Lizzy held her peace. Here was no room for argument. He had flung the door of his conscience in the face of her who woke it. But it was too late, for the word was in already. Oh! that false reverence which men substitute for adoring obedience, and wherewith they reprove the childlike spirit that does not know another kingdom than that of God and that of Mammon! God never gave man thing to do concerning which it were irreverent to ponder how the son of God would have done it.

But, I say, the word was in, and, partly no doubt from its following so close upon the dream the factor had had, was potent in its operation. He fell a thinking, and a thinking more honestly than he had thought for many a day. And presently it was revealed to him that, if he were in the horse-market wanting to buy, and a man there who had to sell said to him—"He wadna du for you, sir; ye wad be tired o' 'im in a week," he would never remark, "What a fool the fellow is!", but—"Weel noo, I ca' that neibourly!" He did not get quite so far just then as to see that every man to whom he might want to sell a horse was as much his

neighbour as his own brother; nor, indeed, if he had got as far, would it have indicated much progress in honesty, seeing he would at any time, when needful and possible, have cheated that brother in the matter of a horse, as certainly as he would a Patagonian or Chinaman. But the warped glass of a bad maxim had at least been cracked in his window.

The peacemaker sat in silence the rest of the night, but the factor's sleep was broken, and at times he wandered. He was not so well the next day, and his wife, gathering that Lizzy had been talking, and herself feeling better, would not allow her to sit up with him any more.

Days and days passed, and still Malcolm had no word from Lenorme, and was getting hopeless in respect of that quarter of possible aid. But so long as Florimel could content herself with the quiet of Lossie House, there was time to wait, he said to himself. She was not idle, and that was promising. Every day she rode out with Stoat. Now and then she would make a call in the neighbourhood, and, apparently to trouble Malcolm, took care to let him know that

on one of these occasions her call had been upon Mrs. Stewart. One thing he did feel was that she made no renewal of her friendship with his grandfather: she had, alas! outgrown the girlish fancy. Poor Duncan took it much to heart. She saw more of the minister and his wife, who both flattered her, than anybody else, and was expecting the arrival of Lady Bellair and Lord Liftore with the utmost impatience. They, for their part, were making the journey by the easiest possible stages, tacking and veering, and visiting everyone of their friends that lay between London and Lossie: they thought to give Florimel the little lesson, that, though they accepted her invitation, they had plenty of friends in the world besides her ladyship, and were not dying to see her.

One evening, Malcolm, as he left the grounds of Mr. Morrison, on whom he had been calling, saw a travelling carriage pass towards Portlossie; and something liker fear laid hold of his heart than he had ever felt except when Florimel and he on the night of the storm took her father for Lord Gernon the wizard. As soon as he reached certain available fields, he sent Kelpie

tearing across them, dodged through a fir-wood, and came out on the road half a mile in front of the carriage: as again it passed him he saw that his fears were facts, for in it sat the bold-faced countess, and the mean-hearted lord. Something *must* be done at last, and until it was done good watch must be kept.

I must here note that, during this time of hoping and waiting, Malcolm had attended to another matter of importance. Over every element influencing his life, his family, his dependents, his property, he desired to possess a lawful, honest command: where he had to render account, he would be head. Therefore, through Mr. Soutar's London agent, to whom he sent up Davy, and whom he brought acquainted with Merton, and his former landlady at the curiosity-shop, he had discovered a good deal about Mrs. Catanach from her London associates, among them the herb-doctor, and his little boy who had watched Davy, and he had now almost completed an outline of evidence, which, grounded on that of Rose, might be used against Mrs. Catanach at any moment. He had also set inquiries on foot in the track of Caley's

antecedents, and had discovered more than the acquaintance between her and Mrs. Catanach. Also he had arranged that Hodges, the man who had lost his leg through his cruelty to Kelpie, should leave for Duff Harbour as soon as possible after his discharge from the hospital. He was determined to crush the evil powers which had been ravaging his little world.

CHAPTER VI.

AN OFFERING.

CLEMENTINA was always ready to accord any reasonable request Florimel could make of her; but her letter lifted such a weight from her heart and life that she would now have done whatever she desired, reasonable or unreasonable, provided only it was honest. She had no difficulty in accepting Florimel's explanation that her sudden disappearance was but a breaking of the social gaol, the flight of the weary bird from its foreign cage back to the country of its nest; and that same morning she called upon Demon. The hound, feared and neglected, was rejoiced to see her, came when she called him, and received her caresses: there was no ground for dreading his company. It was a long journey, but if it had been across a desert instead of

through her own country, the hope that lay at the end of it would have made it more than pleasant. She, as well as Lady Bellair, had friends upon the way, but no desire either to lengthen the journey or shorten its tedium by visiting them.

The letter would have found her at Wast beach instead of London, had not the society and instructions of the schoolmaster detained her a willing prisoner to its heat and glare and dust. Him only in all London must she see to bid good-bye. To Camden Town therefore she went that same evening, when his work would be over for the day. As usual now, she was shown into his room—his only one. As usual also, she found him poring over his Greek Testament. The gracious, graceful woman looked lovelily strange in that mean chamber—like an opal in a brass ring. There was no such contrast between the room and its occupant. His bodily presence was too weak to "stick fiery off" from its surroundings, and to the eye that saw through the bodily presence to the inherent grandeur, that grandeur suggested no discrepancy, being of the kind that

lifts everything to its own level, casts the mantle of its own radiance around its surroundings. Still to the eye of love and reverence it was not pleasant to see him in such *entourage*, and now that Clementina was going to leave him, the ministering spirit that dwelt in the woman was troubled.

"Ah!" he said, and rose as she entered; "this is then the angel of my deliverance!" But with such a smile he did not look as if he had much to be delivered from. "You see," he went on, "old man as I am, and peaceful, the summer will lay hold upon me. She stretches out a long arm into this desert of houses and stones, and sets me longing after the green fields and the living air—it seems dead here—and the face of God—as much as one may behold of the Infinite through the revealing veil of earth and sky and sea. Shall I confess my weakness, my poverty of spirit, my covetousness after the visual? I was even getting a little tired of that glorious God-and-man-lover, Saul of Tarsus—no, not of him, never of *him*, only of his shadow in his words. Yet perhaps, yes I think so, it is God alone of whom a man

can never get tired. Well, no matter; tired I was; when lo! here comes my pupil, with more of God in her face than all the worlds and their skies he ever made!"

"I would my heart were as full of him, too, then, sir!" answered Clementina. "But if I am anything of a comfort to you, I am more than glad,—therefore the more sorry to tell you that I am going to leave you—though for a little while only, I trust."

"You do not take me by surprise, my lady. I have of course been looking forward for some time to my loss and your gain. The world is full of little deaths, deaths of all sorts and sizes, rather let me say. For this one I was prepared. The good summer land calls you to its bosom, and you must go."

"Come with me," cried Clementina, her eyes eager with the light of the sudden thought, while her heart reproached her grievously that only now first had it come to her.

"A man must not leave the most irksome work for the most peaceful pleasure," answered the schoolmaster. "I am able to live—yes, and do my work, without you, my lady," he added

with a smile, "though I shall miss you sorely."

"But you do not know where I want you to come," she said.

"What difference can that make, my lady, except indeed in the amount of pleasure to be refused, seeing this is not a matter of choice? I must be with the children whom I have engaged to teach, and whose parents pay me for my labour—not with those who, besides, can do well without me."

"I cannot, sir—not for long, at least."

"What! not with Malcolm to supply my place?"

Clementina blushed, but only like a white rose. She did not turn her head aside; she did not lower their lids to veil the light she felt mount into her eyes; she looked him gently in the face as before, and her aspect of entreaty did not change.

"Ah! do not be unkind, master," she said.

"Unkind!" he repeated. "You know I am not. I have more kindness in my heart than my lips can tell. You do not know, you could not yet imagine the half of what I hope of and for and from you."

"I *am* going to see Malcolm," she said, with a little sigh. "That is, I am going to visit Lady Lossie at her place in Scotland—your own old home, where so many must love you. —*Can't* you come? I shall be travelling alone, quite alone, except my servants."

A shadow came over the schoolmaster's face.

"You do not *think*, my lady, or you would not press me. It pains me that you do not see at once it would be dishonest to go without timely notice to my pupils, and to the public too. But, beyond that quite, I never do anything of myself. I go, not where I wish, but where I seem to be called or sent. I never even wish much—except when I pray to him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. After what he wants to give me I am wishing all day long. I used to build many castles, not without a beauty of their own—that was when I had less understanding: now I leave them to God to build for me—he does it better, and they last longer. See now, this very hour, when I needed help—could I have contrived a more lovely annihilation of the monotony that threatened to invade my weary

spirit, than this inroad of light in the person of my lady Clementina? Nor will he allow me to get over-wearied with vain efforts. I do not think he will keep me here long, for I find I cannot do much for these children. They are but some of his many pagans—not yet quite ready to receive Christianity, I think—not like children with some of the old seeds of the truth buried in them, that want to be turned up nearer to the light. This ministration I take to be more for my good than theirs—a little trial of faith and patience for me—a stony corner of the lovely valley of humiliation to cross. True, I *might* be happier where I could hear the larks, but I do not know that anywhere have I been more peaceful than in this little room, on which I see you so often cast round your eyes curiously—perhaps pitifully, my lady?"

"It is not at all a fit place for *you*," said Clementina, with a touch of indignation.

"Softly, my lady—lest, without knowing it, your love should make you sin! Who set thee, I pray, for a guardian angel over my welfare? I could scarce have a lovelier—true! but where

is thy brevet? No, my lady! it is a greater than thou that sets me the bounds of my habitation. Perhaps he may give me a palace one day. If I might choose, it would be the things that belong to a cottage—the whiteness and the greenness and the sweet odours of cleanliness. But the father has decreed for his children that they shall know the thing that is neither their ideal nor his. Who can imagine how in this respect things looked to our Lord when he came and found so little faith on the earth! But, perhaps, my lady, you would not pity my present condition so much, if you had seen the cottage in which I was born, and where my father and mother loved each other, and died happier than on their wedding day. There I was happy too until their loving ambition decreed that I should be a scholar and a clergyman. Not before then did I ever know anything worthy the name of trouble. A little cold and a little hunger at times, and not a little restlessness always, was all. But then—ah then, my troubles began! Yet God, who bringeth light out of darkness, hath brought good even out of my weakness and presumption

09/24/10

and half unconscious falsehood!—When do you go?"

"To-morrow morning—as I purpose."

"Then God be with thee. He *is* with thee, only my prayer is that thou mayst know it. He is with me and I know it. He does not find this chamber too mean or dingy or unclean to let me know him near me in it."

"Tell me one thing before I go," said Clementina: "are we not commanded to bear each other's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ? I read it to-day."

"Then why ask me?"

"For another question: does not that involve the command to those who have burdens that they should allow others to bear them?"

"Surely, my lady. But *I* have no burden to let you bear."

"Why should I have everything, and you nothing?—Answer me that."

"My lady, I have millions more than you, for I have been gathering the crumbs under my master's table for thirty years."

"You are a king," answered Clementina. "But a king needs a handmaiden somewhere

in his house: that let *me* be in yours. No, I will be proud, and assert my rights. I am your daughter. If I am not, why am I here? Do you not remember telling me that the adoption of God meant a closer relation than any other fatherhood, even his own first fatherhood, could signify? You cannot cast me off if you would. Why should you be poor when I am rich?—You *are* poor. You cannot deny it," she concluded with a serious playfulness.

"I will not deny my privileges," said the schoolmaster, with a smile such as might have acknowledged the possession of some exquisite and envied rarity.

"I believe," insisted Clementina, "you are just as poor as the apostle Paul when he sat down to make a tent—or as our Lord himself after he gave up carpentering."

"You are wrong there, my lady. I am not so poor as they must often have been."

"But I don't know how long I may be away, and you may fall ill, or—or—see some—some book you want very much, or——"

"I never do," said the schoolmaster.

"What! never see a book you want to have?"

"No; not now. I have my Greek Testament, my Plato, and my Shakspere—and one or two little books besides, whose wisdom I have not yet quite exhausted."

"I can't bear it!" cried Clementina, almost on the point of weeping. "You will not let me near you. You put out an arm as long as the summer's and push me away from you. *Let* me be your servant."

As she spoke, she rose, and walking softly up to him where he sat, kneeled at his knees, and held out suppliantly a little bag of white silk, tied with crimson.

"Take it—father," she said, hesitating, and bringing the word out with an effort; "take your daughter's offering—a poor thing to show her love, but something to ease her heart."

He took it, and weighed it up and down in his hand with an amused smile, but his eyes full of tears. It was heavy. He opened it. A chair was within his reach, he emptied it on the seat of it, and laughed with merry delight as its contents came tumbling out.

"I never saw so much gold in my life, if it were all taken together," he said. "What

beautiful stuff it is! But I don't want it, my dear. It would but trouble me." And as he spoke, he began to put it in the bag again. "You will want it for your journey," he said.

"I have plenty in my reticule," she answered. "That is a mere nothing to what I could have to-morrow morning for writing a cheque. I am afraid I am very rich. It is such a shame! But I can't well help it. You must teach me how to become poor.—Tell me true: how much money have you?"

She said this with such an earnest look of simple love that the schoolmaster made haste to rise, that he might conceal his growing emotion.

"Rise, my dear lady," he said, as he rose himself, "and I will show you."

He gave her his hand, and she obeyed, but troubled and disappointed, and so stood looking after him, while he went to a drawer. Thence, searching in a corner of it, he brought a half-sovereign, a few shillings, and some coppers, and held them out to her on his hand, with the smile of one who has proved his point.

"There!" he said; "do you think Paul would

have stopped preaching to make a tent so long as he had as much as that in his pocket? I shall have more on Saturday, and I always carry a month's rent in my good old watch, for which I never had much use, and now have less than ever."

Clementina had been struggling with herself; now she burst into tears.

"Why, what a misspending of precious sorrow!" exclaimed the schoolmaster. "Do you think because a man has not a gold mine he must die of hunger? I once heard of a sparrow that never had a worm left for the morrow, and died a happy death notwithstanding." As he spoke he took her handkerchief from her hand and dried her tears with it. But he had enough ado to keep his own back. "Because I won't take a bagful of gold from you when I don't want it," he went on, "do you think I should let myself starve without coming to you? I promise you I will let you know—come to you if I can, the moment I get too hungry to do my work well, and have no money left. Should I think it a disgrace to take money from *you?* That would show a poverty of spirit such as I

hope never to fall into. My *sole* reason for refusing now is that I do not need it."

But for all his loving words and assurances, Clementina could not stay her tears. She was not ready to weep, but now her eyes were as a fountain.

"See, then, for your tears are hard to bear, my daughter," he said, "I will take one of these golden ministers, and if it has flown from me ere you come, seeing that, like the raven, it will not return if once I let it go, I will ask you for another. It *may* be God's will that you should feed me for a time."

"Like one of Elijah's ravens," said Clementina, with an attempted laugh that was really a sob.

"Like a dove whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold," said the schoolmaster.

A moment of silence followed, broken only by Clementina's failures in quieting herself.

"To me," he resumed, "the sweetest fountain of money is the hand of love, but a man has no right to take it from that fountain except he is in want of it. I am not. True, I go

somewhat bare, my lady; but what is that when my Lord would have it so?"

He opened again the bag, and slowly, reverentially indeed, drew from it one of the new sovereigns with which it was filled. He put it into a waistcoat pocket, and laid the bag on the table.

"But your clothes are shabby, sir," said Clementina, looking at him with a sad little shake of the head.

"Are they?" he returned, and looked down at his lower garments, reddening and anxious. "—I did not think they were more than a little rubbed, but they shine somewhat," he said. "—They are indeed polished by use," he went on, with a troubled little laugh; "but they have no holes yet—at least none that are visible," he corrected. "If you tell me, my lady, if you honestly tell me that my garments"—and he looked at the sleeve of his coat, drawing back his head from it to see it better—"are unsightly, I will take of your money and buy me a new suit."

Over his coat-sleeve he regarded her, questioning.

"Everything about you is beautiful!" she burst out. "You want nothing but a body that lets the light through!"

She took the hand still raised in his survey of his sleeve, pressed it to her lips, and walked, with even more than her wonted state, slowly from the room. He took the bag of gold from the table, and followed her down the stair. Her chariot was waiting her at the door. He handed her in, and laid the bag on the little seat in front.

"Will you tell him to drive home," she said, with a firm voice, and a smile which if anyone care to understand, let him read Spenser's fortieth sonnet. And so they parted. The coachman took the queer shabby un-London-like man for a fortune-teller his lady was in the habit of consulting, and paid homage to his power with the handle of his whip as he drove away. The schoolmaster returned to his room, not to his Plato, not even to Saul of Tarsus, but to the Lord himself.

CHAPTER VII.

THOUGHTS.

WHEN Malcolm took Kelpie to her stall the night of the arrival of Lady Bellair and her nephew, he was rushed upon by Demon, and nearly prostrated between his immoderate welcome and the startled rearing of the mare. The hound had arrived a couple of hours before, while Malcolm was out. He wondered he had not seen him with the carriage he had passed, never suspecting he had had another conductress, or dreaming what his presence there signified for him.

I have not said much concerning Malcolm's feelings with regard to Lady Clementina, but all this time the sense of her existence had been like an atmosphere surrounding and pervading his thought. He saw in her the promise of all

he could desire to see in woman. His love was not of the blind-little-boy sort, but of a deeper, more exacting, keen-eyed kind, that sees faults where even a true mother will not. so jealous is it of the perfection of the beloved. But one thing was plain even to this seraphic dragon that dwelt sleepless in him, and there was eternal content in the thought, that such a woman, once started on the right way, would soon leave fault and weakness behind her, and become as one of the grand women of old, whose religion was simply what religion is—life —neither more nor less than life. She would be a saint without knowing it, the only grand kind of sainthood. Whoever can think of religion as an addition to life, however glorious —a starry crown, say, set upon the head of humanity, is not yet the least in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever thinks of life as a something that could be without religion, is in deathly ignorance of both. Life and religion are one, or neither is anything: I will not say neither is growing to be anything. Religion is no way of life, no show of life, no observance of any sort. It is neither the food nor the medicine of

being. It is life essential. To think otherwise is as if a man should pride himself on his honesty, or his parental kindness, or hold up his head amongst men because he never killed one: were he less than honest or kind or free from blood, he would yet think something of himself! The man to whom virtue is but the ornament of character, something over and above, not essential to it, is not yet a man.

If I say then, that Malcolm was always thinking about Lady Clementina when he was not thinking about something he *had* to think about, have I not said nearly enough on the matter? Should I ever dream of attempting to set forth what love is, in such a man for such a woman? There are comparatively few that have more than the glimmer of a notion of what love means. God only knows how grandly, how passionately yet how calmly, how divinely the man and the woman he has made, might, may, shall love each other. One thing only I will dare to say: that the love that belonged to Malcolm's nature was one through the very nerves of which the love of God must rise and flow and return, as its essential life. If

any man think that such a love could no longer be the love of the man for the woman, he knows his own nature, and that of the woman he pretends or thinks he adores, but in the darkest of glasses.

Malcolm's lowly idea of himself did not at all interfere with his loving Clementina, for at first his love was entirely dissociated from any thought of hers. When the idea—the mere idea of her loving him presented itself, from whatever quarter suggested, he turned from it with shame and self-reproof: the thought was in its own nature too unfit! That splendour regard him! From a social point of view there was of course little presumption in it. The Marquis of Lossie bore a name that might pair itself with any in the land; but Malcolm did not yet feel that the title made much difference to the fisherman. He was what he was, and that was something very lowly indeed. Yet the thought would at times dawn up from somewhere in the infinite matrix of thought, that perhaps, if he went to college, and graduated, and dressed like a gentleman, and did everything as gentlemen do, in short, claimed his rank, and lived as

a marquis should, as well as a fisherman might, —then—then—was it not—might it not be within the bounds of possibility—just within them—that the great-hearted, generous, liberty-loving Lady Clementina, groom as he had been, *menial* as he had heard himself called, and as, ere yet he knew his birth, he had laughed to hear, knowing that his service was true,—that she, who despised nothing human, would be neither disgusted nor contemptuous nor wrathful, if, from a great way off, at an awful remove of humility and worship, he were to wake in her a surmise that he dared feel towards her as he had never felt and never could feel towards any other? For would it not be altogether counter to the principles he had so often heard her announce and defend, to despise him because he had earned his bread by doing honourable work —work hearty, and up to the worth of his wages? Was she one to say and not see—to opine and not believe? or was she one to hold and not practise—to believe for the heart and not for the hand—to say *I go*, and not go—*I love*, and not help? If such she were, then there were for him no further searchings of the

heart upon her account; he could but hold up her name in the common prayer for all men, only praying besides not to dream about her when he slept.

At length, such thoughts rising again and again, and ever accompanied by such reflections concerning the truth of her character, and by the growing certainty that her convictions were the souls of actions to be born them, his daring of belief in her strengthened until he began to think that perhaps it would be neither his early history, nor his defective education, nor his clumsiness, that would prevent her from listening to such words wherewith he burned to throw open the gates of his world, and pray her to enter and sit upon its loftiest throne—its loftiest throne but one. And with the thought he felt as if he must run to her, calling aloud that he was the Marquis of Lossie, and throw himself at her feet.

But the wheels of his thought-chariot, self-moved, were rushing, and here was no goal at which to halt or turn!—for, feeling thus, where was his faith in her principles? How now was he treating the truth of her nature? where now

were his convictions of the genuineness of her professions? Where were those principles, that truth, those professions, if after all she would listen to a marquis and would not listen to a groom? To suppose such a thing was to wrong her grievously. To herald his suit with his rank would be to insult her, declaring that he regarded her theories of humanity as wordy froth. And what a chance of proving her truth would he not deprive her of, if, as he approached her, he called on the marquis to supplement the man!—But what then was the man, fisherman or marquis, to dare *even himself* to such a glory as the Lady Clementina?—This much of a man at least, answered his waking dignity, that he could not condescend to be accepted as Malcolm, Marquis of Lossie, knowing he would have been rejected as Malcolm MacPhail, fisherman and groom. Accepted as marquis, he would for ever be haunted with the *channering* question whether she would have accepted him as groom? And if in his pain he were one day to utter it, and she in her honesty were to confess she would not, must she not then fall prone from her pedestal in his imagination? Could

he then, in love for the woman herself, condescend as marquis to marry one who *might* not have married him as any something else he could honestly have been, under the all-enlightening sun?—Ah, but again! was that fair to her yet? Might she not see in the marquis the truth and worth which the blinding falsehoods of society prevented her from seeing in the groom? Might not a lady—he tried to think of a lady in the abstract—might not a lady, in marrying a marquis, a lady to whom from her own position a marquis was just a man on the level, marry in him the man he was, and not the marquis he seemed? Most certainly, he answered: he must not be unfair.—Not the less however did he shrink from the thought of taking her prisoner under the shield of his marquisate, beclouding her nobility, and depriving her of the rare chance of shining forth as the sun in the splendour of womanly truth. No; he would choose the greater risk of losing her, for the chance of winning her greater.

So far Malcolm got with his theories; but the moment he began to think in the least practically, he recoiled altogether from the presump-

tion. Under no circumstances could he ever have the courage to approach Lady Clementina with a thought of himself in his mind. How could he have dared even to raise her imagined eidolon for his thoughts to deal withal! She had never shown him personal favour. He could not tell whether she had listened to what he had tried to lay before her. He did not know that she had gone to hear his master; Florimel had never referred to their visit to Hope Chapel; his surprise would have equalled his delight at the news that she had already become as a daughter to the schoolmaster.

And what had been Clementina's thoughts since learning that Florimel had not run away with her groom? It were hard to say with completeness. Accuracy however may not be equally unattainable. Her first feeling was an utterly inarticulate, undefined pleasure that Malcolm was free to be thought about. She was clear next that it would be matter for honest rejoicing if the truest man she had ever met except his master, was not going to marry such an unreality as Florimel—one concerning whom, as things had been going of late, it was

impossible to say that she was not more likely to turn to evil than to good. Clementina with all her generosity could not help being doubtful of a woman who could make a companion of such a man as Liftore, a man to whom every individual particle of Clementina's nature seemed for itself to object. But she was not yet past befriending.

Then she began to grow more *curious* about Malcolm. She had already much real knowledge of him, gathered both from himself and from Mr. Graham;—as to what went to make the man, she knew him indeed, not thoroughly, but well; and just therefore, she said to herself, there were some points in his history and condition concerning which she had *curiosity*. The principal of these was whether he might not be engaged to some young woman in his own station of life. It was not merely possible, but was it likely he could have escaped it? In the lower ranks of society, men married younger—they had no false aims to prevent them: that implied earlier engagements. On the other hand, was it likely that in a fishing village there would be any choice of girls who could under-

stand him when he talked about Plato and the New Testament? If there were *one* however, that might be—*worse?*—Yes, *worse;* she accepted the word. Neither was it absolutely necessary in a wife that she should understand more of her husband than his heart. Many learned men had had mere housekeepers for wives, and been satisfied, at least never complained. And what did she know about the fishers, men or women—there were none at Wastbeach? For anything she knew to the contrary, they might all be philosophers together, and a fitting match for Malcolm might be far more easy to find amongst them than in the society to which she herself belonged, where in truth the philosophical element was rare enough. Then arose in her mind, she could not have told how, the vision, half logical, half pictorial, of a whole family of brave, believing, daring, saving fisher-folk, father, mother, boys and girls, each sacrificing to the rest, each sacrificed to by all, and all devoted to their neighbours. Grand it was and blissful, and the borders of the great sea alone seemed fit place for such beings amphibious of time and eternity! Their very toils and

dangers were but additional atmospheres to press their souls together! It was glorious! Why had she been born an earl's daughter,—never to look a danger in the face—never to have a chance of a true life—that is, a grand, simple, noble one?—Who then denied her the chance? Had she *no* power to order her own steps, to determine her own being? Was she nailed to her rank? Or who was there that could part her from it? Was she a prisoner in the dungeons of the House of Pride? When the gates of paradise closed behind Adam and Eve, they had this consolation left, that "the world was all before them where to choose." Was she not a free woman—without even a guardian to trouble her with advice? She had no excuse to act ignobly!—But had she any for being unmaidenly?—Would it then be—would it be a *very* unmaidenly thing if——? The rest of the sentence did not take even the shape of words. But she answered it nevertheless in the words: "Not so unmaidenly as presumptuous." And alas there was little hope that *he* would ever presume to—? He was such a modest youth with all his directness and fearless-

ness! If he had no respect for rank,—and that was—yes, she would say the word, *hopeful*—he had, on the other hand, the profoundest respect for the human, and she could not tell how that might, in the individual matter, operate.

Then she fell a-thinking of the difference between Malcolm and any other servant she had ever known. She hated the *servile*. She knew that it was false as well as low: she had not got so far as to see that it was low through its being false. She knew that most servants, while they spoke with the appearance of respect in presence, altered their tone entirely when beyond the circle of the eye—theirs was eye-service—they were men-pleasers—they were servile. She had overheard her maid speak of her as Lady Clem, and that not without a streak of contempt in the tone. But here was a man who touched no imaginary hat while he stood in the presence of his mistress, neither swore at her in the stable-yard. He looked her straight in the face, and would upon occasion speak—not his *mind*—but the truth to her. Even his slight mistress had the conviction that if one dared in his presence but utter her name

lightly, whoever he were he would have to answer to him for it. What a lovely thing was true service!—Absolutely divine! But, alas, such a youth would never, could never dare offer other than such service! Were she even to encourage him as a maiden might, he would but serve her the better—would but embody his recognition of her favour, in fervour of ministering devotion.—Was it not a recognized law, however, in the relation of superiors and inferiors, that with regard to such matters as well as others of no moment, the lady—?—— Ah, but! for her to take the initiative, would provoke the conclusion—as revolting to her as unavoidable to him—that she judged herself his superior—so greatly his superior as to be absolved from the necessity of behaving to him on the ordinary footing of man and woman. What a ground to start from with a husband! The idea was hateful to her. She tried the argument that such a procedure arrogated merely a superiority in social standing; but it made her recoil from it the more. He was so immeasurably her superior, that the poor little advantage on her side vanished like a candle in

the sunlight, and she laughed herself to scorn. "Fancy," she laughed, "a midge, on the strength of having wings, condescending to offer marriage to a horse!" It would argue the assumption of equality in other and more important things than rank, or at least the confidence that her social superiority not only counter-balanced the difference, but left enough over to her credit to justify her initiative. And what a miserable fiction that money and position had a right to the first move before greatness of living fact! that *having* had the precedence of being! That Malcolm should imagine such *her* judgment—No—let all go—let himself go rather!—And then he might not choose to accept her munificent offer! Or worse—far worse!—what if he should be tempted by rank and wealth, and, accepting her, be shorn of his glory and proved of the ordinary human type after all! A thousand times rather would she see the bright particular star blazing unreachable above her! What! would she carry it about a cinder in her pocket?—And yet if he *could* be "turned to a coal," why should she go on worshipping him?—alas! the offer itself was

the only test severe enough to try him withal, and if he proved a cinder, she would by the very use of the test be bound to love honour and obey her cinder. She could not well reject him for accepting her—neither could she marry him if he rose grandly superior to her temptations. No; he could be nothing to her nearer than the bright particular star.

Thus went the thoughts to and fro in the minds of each. Neither could see the way. Both feared the risk of loss. Neither could hope greatly for gain.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DUNE.

HAVING put Kelpie up, and fed and bedded her, Malcolm took his way to the Seaton, full of busily anxious thought. Things had taken a bad turn, and he was worse off for counsel than before. The enemy was in the house with his sister, and he had no longer any chance of judging how matters were going, as now he never rode out with her. But at least he could haunt the house. He would run therefore to his grandfather, and tell him that he was going to occupy his old quarters at the House that night.

Returning directly and passing, as had been his custom, through the kitchen to ascend the small corkscrew stair the servants generally used, he encountered Mrs. Courthope, who told

him that her ladyship had given orders that her maid, who had come with Lady Bellair, should have his room. He was at once convinced that Florimel had done so with the intention of banishing him from the house, for there were dozens of rooms vacant, and many of them more suitable. It was a hard blow! How he wished for Mr. Graham to consult! And yet Mr. Graham was not of much use where any sort of plotting was wanted. He asked Mrs. Courthope to let him have another room; but she looked so doubtful that he withdrew his request, and went back to his grandfather.

It was Saturday, and not many of the boats would go fishing. Findlay's would not leave the harbour till Sunday was over, and therefore Malcolm was free. But he could not rest, and would go line-fishing.

"Daddy," he said, "I'm gaein oot to catch a haddick or sae to oor denner the morn. Ye micht jist sit doon upo' ane o' the Boar's Taes, an' tak a play o' yer pipes. I'll hear ye fine, an' it'll du me guid."

The Boar's Toes were two or three small rocks that rose out of the sand near the end of

the dune. Duncan agreed right willingly, and Malcolm, borrowing some lines, and taking the Psyche's dinghy, rowed out into the bay.

The sun was down, the moon was up, and he had caught more fish than he wanted. His grandfather had got tired, and gone home, and the fountain of his anxious thoughts began to flow more rapidly. He must go ashore. He must go up to the House: who could tell what might not be going on there? He drew in his line, purposing to take the best of the fish to Miss Horn, and some to Mrs. Courthope, as in the old days.

The Psyche still lay on the sands, and he was rowing the dinghy towards her, when, looking round to direct his course, he thought he caught a glimpse of some one seated on the slope of the dune. Yes, there was some one there, sure enough. The old times rushed back on his memory: could it be Florimel? Alas! it was not likely she would now be wandering about alone! But if it were? Then for one endeavour more to rouse her slumbering conscience! He would call up all the associations of the last few months she had spent in the

place, and, with the spirit of her father, as it were, hovering over her, conjure her, in his name, to break with Liftore.

He rowed swiftly to the Psyche—beached and drew up the dinghy, and climbed the dune. Plainly enough it was a lady who sat there. It might be one from the upper town, enjoying the lovely night; it *might* be Florimel, but how could she have got away, or wished to get away from her newly arrived guests? The voices of several groups of walkers came from the high road behind the dune, but there was no other figure to be seen all along the sands. He drew nearer. The lady did not move. If it were Florimel, would she not know him as he came, and would she wait for him?

He drew nearer still. His heart gave a great throb. Could it be? Or was the moon weaving some hallucination in his troubled brain? If it was a phantom, it was that of Lady Clementina: if but modelled of the filmy vapours of the moonlight, and the artist his own brain, the phantom was welcome as joy! His spirit seemed to soar aloft in the yellow air, and hang hovering over and around her, while his body

stood rooted to the spot, like one who fears by moving nigher to lose the lovely vision of a mirage. She sat motionless, her gaze on the sea. Malcolm bethought himself that she could not know him in his fisher-dress, and must take him for some rude fisherman staring at her. He must go at once, or approach and address her. He came forward at once.

"My lady!" he said.

She did not start. Neither did she speak. She did not even turn her face. She rose first, then turned, and held out her hand. Three steps more, and he had it in his, and his eyes looked straight into hers. Neither spoke. The moon shone full on Clementina's face. There was no illumination fitter for that face than the moonlight, and to Malcolm it was lovelier than ever. Nor was it any wonder it should seem so to him, for certainly never had the eyes in it rested on his with such a lovely and trusting light in them. A moment she stood, then slowly sank again upon the sand, and drew her skirts about her with a dumb show of invitation. The place where she sat was a little terraced hollow in the slope, forming a convenient seat. Mal-

colm saw but could not believe she actually made room for him to sit beside her—alone with her in the universe. It was too much; he dared not believe it. And now by one of those wondrous duplications which are not always at least born of the fancy, the same scene in which he had found Florimel thus seated on the slope of the dune, appeared to be passing again through Malcolm's consciousness, only instead of Florimel was Clementina, and instead of the sun was the moon. And creature of the sunlight as Florimel was, bright and gay and beautiful, she paled into a creature of the cloud beside this maiden of the moonlight, tall and stately, silent and soft and grand.

Again she made a movement. This time he could not doubt her invitation. It was as if her soul made room in her unseen world for him to enter and sit beside her. But who could enter heaven in his work-day garments?

"Won't you sit by me, Malcolm?" seeing his more than hesitation, she said at last, with a slight tremble in the voice that was music itself in his ears.

"I have been catching fish, my lady," he

answered, "and my clothes must be unpleasant. I will sit here."

He went a little lower on the slope, and laid himself down, leaning on his elbow.

"Do fresh water fishes smell the same as the sea-fishes, Malcolm?" she asked.

"Indeed I am not certain, my lady. Why?"

"Because if they do,——You remember what you said to me as we passed the saw-mill in the wood?"

It was by silence Malcolm showed he did remember.

"Does not this night remind you of that one at Wastbeach when we came upon you singing?" said Clementina.

"It *is* like it, my lady—now. But a little ago, before I saw you, I was thinking of that night, and thinking how different this was."

Again a moonfilled silence fell; and once more it was the lady who broke it.

"Do you know who are at the house?" she asked.

"I do, my lady," he replied.

"I had not been there more than an hour or two," she went on, "when they arrived. I sup-

pose Florimel—Lady Lossie thought I would not come if she told me she expected them."

"And would you have come, my lady?"

"I cannot endure the earl."

"Neither can I. But then I know more about him than your ladyship does, and I am miserable for my mistress."

It stung Clementina as if her heart had taken a beat backward. But her voice was steadier than it had yet been as she returned—

"Why should you be miserable for Lady Lossie?"

"I would die rather than see her marry that wretch," he answered.

Again her blood stung her in the left side.

"You do not want her to marry, then?" she said.

"I do," answered Malcolm, emphatically, "but not that fellow."

"Whom then, if I may ask?" ventured Clementina trembling.

But Malcolm was silent. He did not feel it would be right to say. Clementina turned sick at heart.

"I have heard there is something dangerous

about the moonlight," she said. "I think it does not suit me to-night. I will go—home."

Malcolm sprung to his feet and offered his hand. She did not take it, but rose more lightly, though more slowly than he.

"How did you come from the park, my lady?" he asked.

"By a gate over there," she answered, pointing. "I wandered out after dinner, and the sea drew me."

"If your ladyship will allow me, I will take you a much nearer way back," he said.

"Do then," she returned.

He thought she spoke a little sadly, and set it down to her having to go back to her fellow-guests. What if she should leave to-morrow morning! he thought. He could never then be sure she had really been with him that night. He must then sometimes think it a dream. But oh, what a dream! He could thank God for it all his life, if he should never dream so again.

They walked across the grassy sand towards the tunnel in silence, he pondering what he could say that might comfort her and keep her from going so soon.

"My lady never takes me out with her now," he said at length.

He was going to add that, if she pleased, he could wait upon her with Kelpie, and show her the country. But then he saw that, if she were not with Florimel, his sister would be riding everywhere alone with Liftore. Therefore he stopped short.

"And you feel forsaken—deserted?" returned Clementina, sadly still.

"Rather, my lady."

They had reached the tunnel. It looked very black when he opened the door, but there was just a glimmer through the trees at the other end.

"This is the valley of the shadow of death," she said. "Do I walk straight through?"

"Yes, my lady. You will soon come out in the light again," he said.

"Are there no steps to fall down?" she asked.

"None, my lady. But I will go first, if you wish."

"No, that would but cut off the little light I have," she said. "Come beside me."

They passed through in silence, save for the rustle of her dress, and the dull echo that haunted their steps. In a few moments they came out among the trees, but both continued silent. The still, thoughtful moon-night seemed to press them close together, but neither knew that the other felt the same.

They reached a point in the road where another step would bring them in sight of the house.

"You cannot go wrong now, my lady," said Malcolm. "If you please I will go no farther."

"Do you not live in the house?" she asked.

"I used to do as I liked, and could be there or with my grandfather. I did mean to be at the House to-night, but my lady has given my room to her maid."

"What! that woman Caley?"

"I suppose so, my lady. I must sleep to-night in the village.—If you could, my lady," he added, after a pause, and faltered, hesitating. She did not help him, but waited. "If you could—if you would not be displeased at my asking you," he resumed, "—if you *could* keep my

lady from going farther with that—I shall call him names if I go on!"

"It is a strange request," Clementina replied, after a moment's reflection. "I hardly know, as the guest of Lady Lossie, what answer I ought to make to it. One thing I will say, however, that, though you may know more of the man than I, you can hardly dislike him more. Whether I can interfere is another matter. Honestly, I do not think it would be of any use. But I do not say I will not. Good night."

She hurried away, and did not again offer her hand.

Malcolm walked back through the tunnel, his heart singing and making melody. Oh how lovely, how more than lovely, how divinely beautiful she was! And so kind and friendly! Yet she seemed just the least bit fitful too. Something troubled her, he said to himself. But he little thought that he, and no one else, had spoiled the moonlight for her. He went home to glorious dreams—she to a troubled half wakeful night. Not until she had made

up her mind to do her utmost to rescue Florimel from Liftore, even if it gave her to Malcolm, did she find a moment's quiet. It was morning then, but she fell fast asleep, slept late, and woke refreshed.

CHAPTER IX.

CONFESSION OF SIN.

MR. CRATHIE was slowly recovering, but still very weak. He did not, after having turned the corner, get well so fast as his medical minister judged he ought, and the reason was plain to Lizzy, dimly perceptible to his wife: he was ill at ease. A man may have more mind and more conscience, and more discomfort in both or either, than his neighbours give him credit for. They may be in the right about him up to a certain point in his history, but then a crisis, by them unperceived, perhaps to them inappreciable, arrived, after which the man to all eternity could never be the same as they had known him. Such a change must appear improbable, and save on the theory of a higher operative power, is improbable because

impossible. But a man who has not created himself, can never secure himself against the inroad of the glorious terror of that Goodness which was able to utter him into being, with all its possible wrongs and repentances. The fact that a man has never, up to any point yet, been aware of aught beyond himself, cannot shut him out who is beyond him, when at last he means to enter. Not even the soul-benumbing visits of his clerical minister could repress the swell of the slow-mounting day-spring in the soul of the hard, commonplace, business-worshipping man, Hector Crathie. The hireling would talk to him kindly enough—of his illness, or of events of the day, especially those of the town and neighbourhood, and encourage him with reiterated expression of the hope that ere many days they would enjoy a tumbler together as of old, but as to wrong done, apology to make, forgiveness to be sought, or consolation to be found, the dumb dog had not uttered a bark.

The sources of the factor's restless discomfort were now two; the first, that he had lifted his hand to women; the second, the old ground of

his quarrel with Malcolm, brought up by Lizzy.

All his life, since ever he had had business, Mr. Crathie had prided himself on his honesty, and was therefore in one of the most dangerous moral positions a man could occupy—ruinous even to the honesty itself. Asleep in the mud, he dreamed himself awake on a pedestal. At best such a man is but perched on a needle point when he thinketh he standeth. Of him who prided himself on his honour I should expect that one day, in the long run it might be, he would do some vile thing. Not, probably, within the small circle of illumination around his wretched rushlight, but in the great region beyond it, of what to him is a moral darkness, or twilight vague, he may be or may become capable of doing a deed that will stink in the nostrils of the universe—and in his own when he knows it as it is. The honesty in which a man can pride himself must be a small one, for more honesty will ever reveal more defect, while perfect honesty will never think of itself at all. The limited honesty of the factor clave to the interests of his employers, and let the rights he encountered take care of themselves. Those

he dealt with were to him rather as enemies than friends, not enemies to be prayed for, but to be spoiled. Malcolm's doctrine of honesty in horse-dealing was to him ludicrously new. His notion of honesty in that kind was to cheat the buyer for his master if he could, proud to write in his book a large sum against the name of the animal. He would have scorned in his very soul the idea of making a farthing by it himself through any business quirk whatever, but he would not have been the least ashamed if, having sold Kelpie, he had heard—let me say after a week of possession—that she had dashed out her purchaser's brains. He would have been a little shocked, a little sorry perhaps, but nowise ashamed. "By this time," he would have said, "the man ought to have been up to her, and either taken care of himself—or *sold her again*,"—to dash out another man's brains instead!

That the bastard Malcolm, or the ignorant and indeed fallen fisher-girl Lizzy, should judge differently, nowise troubled him: what could they know about the rights and wrongs of business? The fact which Lizzy sought to

bring to bear upon him, that our Lord would not have done such a thing, was to him no argument at all. He said to himself, with the superior smile of arrogated common-sense, that "no mere man since the fall" could be expected to do like him; that he was divine, and had not to fight for a living; that he set us an example that we might see what sinners we were; that religion was one thing, and a very proper thing, but business was another, and a very proper thing also—with customs and indeed laws of its own far more determinate, at least definite, than those of religion, and that to mingle the one with the other was not merely absurd—it was irreverent and wrong, and certainly never intended in the Bible, which must surely be common sense. It was *the Bible* always with him,—never *the will of Christ*. But although he could dispose of the question thus satisfactorily, yet, as he lay ill, supine, without any distracting occupation, the thing haunted him.

Now in his father's cottage had lain, much dabbled in of the children, a certain boardless copy of the Pilgrim's Progress, round in the face and hollow in the back, in which, amongst other

pictures was one of the Wicket-gate. This scripture of his childhood, given by inspiration of God, threw out, in one of his troubled and feverish nights, a dream-bud in the brain of the man. He saw the face of Jesus looking on him over the top of the Wicket-gate, at which he had been for some time knocking in vain, while the cruel dog barked loud from the enemy's yard. But that face, when at last it came, was full of sorrowful displeasure. And in his heart he knew that it was because of a certain transaction in horse-dealing, wherein he had hitherto lauded his own cunning—adroitness, he considered it—and success. One word only he heard from the lips of the Man—"Worker of iniquity,"—and woke with a great start. From that moment truths *began* to be facts to him. The beginning of the change was indeed very small, but every beginning is small, and every beginning is a creation. Monad, molecule, protoplasm, whatever word may be attached to it when it becomes appreciable by men, being then, however, many stages, I believe, upon its journey, beginning is an irrepressible fact; and however far from good or humble even after many days, the man

here began to grow good and humble. His dull unimaginative nature, a perfect lumber-room of the world and its rusting affairs, had received a gift in a dream—a truth from the lips of the Lord, remodelled in the brain and heart of the tinker of Elstow, and sent forth in his wondrous parable to be pictured and printed, and lie in old Hector Crathie's cottage, that it might enter and lie in young Hector Crathie's brain until he grew old and had done wrong enough to heed it, when it rose upon him in a dream, and had its way. Henceforth the claims of his neighbour began to reveal themselves. and his mind to breed conscientious doubts and scruples, with which, struggle as he might against it, a certain respect for Malcolm would keep coming and mingling—a feeling which grew with its returns, until, by slow changes, he began at length to regard him as the minister of God's vengeance—for his punishment,—and perhaps salvation—who could tell?

Lizzy's nightly ministrations had not been resumed, but she often called, and was a good deal with him; for Mrs. Crathie had learned to like the humble, helpful girl still better when

she found she had taken no offence at being deprived of her post of honour by his bedside. One day, when Malcolm was seated, mending a net, among the thin grass and great red daisies of the links by the bank of the burn, where it crossed the sands from the Lossie grounds to the sea, Lizzy came up to him and said,

"The factor wad like to see ye, Ma'colm, as sune's ye can gang till 'im."

She waited no reply. Malcolm rose and went.

At the factor's, the door was opened by Mrs. Crathie herself, who, looking mysterious, led him to the dining-room, where she plunged at once into business, doing her best to keep down all manifestation of the profound resentment she cherished against him. Her manner was confidential, almost coaxing.

"Ye see, Ma'colm," she said, as if pursuing instead of commencing a conversation, "he's some sore about the little *fraicass* between him an' you. Jest make your apoalogies till 'im, and tell 'im you had a drop too much, and your soary for misbehavin' yerself to wann sae much your shuperrior. Tell him that, Ma'colm, an' there's a half-croon to ye."

She wished much to speak English, and I have tried to represent the thing she did speak, which was neither honest Scotch nor anything like English. Alas! the good, pithy, old Anglo-Saxon dialect is fast perishing, and a jargon of corrupt English taking its place.

"But, mem," said Malcolm, taking no notice either of the coin or the words that accompanied the offer of it, "I canna lee. I wasna in drink, an' I'm no sorry."

"Hoot!" returned Mrs. Crathie, blurting out her Scotch fast enough now, "I's warran' ye can lee weel eneuch whan ye ha'e occasion. Tak' yer siller, an' du as I tell ye."

"Wad ye ha'e me damned, mem?"

Mrs. Crathie gave a cry and held up her hands. She was too well accustomed to imprecations from the lips of her husband for any but an affected horror, but, regarding the honest word as a bad one, she assumed an air of injury.

"Wad ye daur to sweir afore a leddy," she exclaimed, shaking her uplifted hands in pretence of ghasted astonishment.

"If Mr. Crathie wishes to see me, ma'am,"

rejoined Malcolm, taking up the shield of English, "I am ready. If not, please allow me to go."

The same moment the bell whose rope was at the head of the factor's bed, rang violently, and Mrs. Crathie's importance collapsed.

"Come this w'y," she said, and turning led him up the stair to the room where her husband lay.

Entering, Malcolm stood astonished at the change he saw upon the strong man of rubicund countenance, and his heart filled with compassion. The factor was sitting up in bed, looking very white and worn and troubled. Even his nose had grown thin and white. He held out his hand to him, and said to his wife, "Tak the door to ye, Mistress Crathie," indicating which side he wished it closed from.

"Ye was some sair upo' me, Ma'colm," he went on, grasping the youth's hand.

"I doobt I was *ower* sair," said Malcolm, who could hardly speak for a lump in his throat.

"Weel, I deserved it. But eh, Ma'colm! I canna believe it was me: it bude to be the drink."

"It *was* the drink," rejoined Malcolm; "an' eh sir! afore ye rise frae that bed, sweir to the great God 'at ye'll never drink nae mair drams, nor onything 'ayont ae tum'ler at a sittin'."

"I sweir't; I sweir't, Ma'colm!" cried the factor.

"It's easy to sweir't noo, sir, but whan ye're up again it'll be hard to keep yer aith.—O Lord!" spoke the youth, breaking out into almost involuntary prayer, "help this man to haud troth wi' thee.—An' noo, Maister Crathie," he resumed, "I'm yer servan', ready to do onything I can. Forgi'e me, sir, for layin' on ower sair."

"I forgi'e ye wi' a' my hert," returned the factor, inly delighted to have something to forgive.

"I thank ye frae mine," answered Malcolm, and again they shook hands.

"But eh, Ma'colm, my man!" said the factor, "hoo will I ever shaw my face again?"

"Fine that!" returned Malcolm, eagerly. "Fowk's terrible guid-natur'd whan ye alloo 'at ye're i' the wrang. I do believe 'at whan a man confesses till 's neebour, an' says he's sorry, he

thinks mair o' 'im nor afore he did it. Ye see we a' ken we ha'e dune wrang, but we ha'ena a' confessed. An' it's a queer thing, but a man'll think it gran' o' 's neebour to confess, whan a' the time there's something he winna repent o' himsel' for fear o' the *shame* o' ha'ein' to confess 't. To me, the shame lies in *no* confessin' efter ye ken ye're wrang. Ye'll see, sir, the fisher-fowk 'ill min' what ye say to them a heap better noo."

"Div ye railly think it, Ma'colm?" sighed the factor with a flush.

"I div that, sir. Only whan ye grow better, gien ye'll alloo me to say't, sir, ye maunna lat Sawtan temp' ye to think 'at this same repentin' was but a wakeness o' the flesh, an' no an enlichtenment o' the speerit."

"I s' tie mysel' up till 't," cried the factor, eagerly. "Gang an' tell them i' my name, 'at I tak' back ilka scart o' a nottice I ever ga'e ane o' them to quit, only we maun ha'e nae mair stan'in' o' honest fowk 'at comes to bigg herbours till them.—Div ye think it wad be weel ta'en gien ye tuik a poun'-nott the piece to the twa women?"

"I wadna du that, sir, gien I was you," answered Malcolm. "For yer ain sake, I wadna to Mistress Mair, for naething wad gar her tak' it—it wad only affront her; an' for Nancy Tacket's sake, I wadna to her, for as her name so's her natur': she wad not only tak it, but she wad lat ye play the same as aften 's ye likit for less siller. Ye'll ha'e mony a chance o' makin' 't up to them baith, ten times ower, afore you an' them pairt, sir."

"I maun lea' the cuintry, Ma'colm."

"'Deed, sir, ye'll du naething o' the kin'. The fishers themsel's wad rise, no to lat ye, as they did wi' Blew Peter! As sune's ye're able to be aboot again, ye'll see plain eneuch 'at there's no occasion for onything like that, sir. Portlossie wadna ken 'tsel' wantin' ye. Jist gie me a commission to say to the twa honest women 'at ye're sorry for what ye did, an' that's a' 'at need be said 'atween you an' them, or their men aither."

The result showed that Malcolm was right; for, the very next day, instead of looking for gifts from him, the two injured women came to the factor's door, first Annie Mair, with the

offering of a few fresh eggs, scarce at the season, and after her Nancy Tacket, with a great lobster.

CHAPTER X.

A VISITATION.

MALCOLM'S custom was, first, immediately after breakfast, to give Kelpie her airing —and a tremendous amount of air she wanted for the huge animal furnace of her frame, and the fiery spirit that kept it alight; then, returning to the Seaton, to change the dress of the groom, in which he always appeared about the house, lest by any chance his mistress should want him, for that of the fisherman, and help with the nets, or the boats, or in whatever was going on. As often as he might he did what seldom a man would—went to the long shed where the women prepared the fish for salting, took a knife, and wrought as deftly as any of them, throwing a marvellously rapid succession of cleaned herrings into the preserving brine. It

was no wonder he was a favourite with the women. Although, however, the place was malodorous and the work dirty, I cannot claim so much for Malcolm as may at first appear to belong to him, for he had been accustomed to the sight and smell from earliest childhood. Still, as I say, it was work the men would not do. He had such a chivalrous humanity that it was misery to him to see man or woman at anything scorned, except he bore a hand himself. He did it half in love, half in terror of being unjust.

He had gone to Mr. Crathie in his fisher clothes, thinking it better the sick man should not be reminded of the cause of his illness more forcibly than could not be helped. The nearest way led past a corner of the house overlooked by one of the drawing-room windows, Clementina saw him, and, judging by his garb that he would probably return presently, went out in the hope of meeting him; and as he was going back to his net by the sea-gate, he caught sight of her on the opposite side of the burn, accompanied only by a book. He walked through the burn, climbed the bank, and approached her.

It was a hot summer afternoon. The burn ran dark and brown and cool in deep shade, but the sea beyond was glowing in light, and the laburnum-blossoms hung like cocoons of sunbeams. No breath of air was stirring; no bird sang; the sun was burning high in the west. Clementina stood waiting him, like a moon that could hold her own in the face of the sun.

"Malcolm," she said, "I have been watching all day, but have not found a single opportunity of speaking to your mistress as you wished. But to tell the truth, I am not sorry, for the more I think about it, the less I see what to say. That another does not like a person, can have little weight with one who does, and I *know* nothing against him. I wish you would release me from my promise. It is such an ugly thing to speak to one's hostess to the disadvantage of a fellow-guest!"

"I understand," said Malcolm. "It was not a right thing to ask of you. I beg your pardon, my lady, and give you back your promise, if such you count it. But indeed I do not think you promised."

"Thank you, I would rather be free. Had

it been before you left London—.—Lady Lossie is very kind, but does not seem to put the same confidence in me as formerly. She and Lady Bellair and that man make a trio, and I am left outside. I almost think I ought to go. Even Caley is more of a friend than I am. I cannot get rid of the suspicion that something not right is going on. There seems a bad air about the place. Those two are playing their game with the inexperience of that poor child, your mistress."

"I know that very well, my lady, but I hope yet they will not win," said Malcolm.

By this time they were near the tunnel.

"Could you let me through to the shore?" asked Clementina.

"Certainly, my lady.—I wish you could see the boats go out. From the Boar's Tail it is a pretty sight. They will all be starting together as soon as the tide turns."

Thereupon Clementina began questioning him about the night-fishing, and Malcolm described its pleasures and dangers, and the pleasures of its dangers, in such fashion that Clementina listened with delight. He dwelt especially on

the feeling almost of disembodiment, and existence as pure thought, arising from the all-pervading clarity and fluidity, the suspension, and the unceasing motion.

"I wish I could once feel like that," exclaimed Clementina. "Could I not go with you—for one night—just for once, Malcolm?"

"My lady, it would hardly do, I am afraid. If you knew the discomforts that must assail one unaccustomed—I cannot tell—but I doubt if you would go. All the doors to bliss have their defences of swamps and thorny thickets through which alone they can be gained. You would need to be a fisherman's sister—or wife, I fear, my lady, to get through to this one."

Clementina smiled gravely, but did not reply, and Malcolm too was silent, thinking.

"Yes," he said at last; "I see how we can manage it. You shall have a boat for your own use, my lady, and——"

"But I want to see just what you see, and to feel, as nearly as I may, what you feel. I don't want a downy, rose-leaf notion of the thing. I want to understand what you fishermen encounter and experience."

"We must make a difference though, my lady. Look what clothes, what boots we fishers must wear to be fit for our work! But you shall have a true idea as far as it reaches, and one that will go a long way towards enabling you to understand the rest. You shall go in a real fishing-boat, with a full crew and all the nets, and you shall catch real herrings; only you shall not be out longer than you please.—But there is hardly time to arrange for it to-night, my lady."

"To-morrow then?"

"Yes. I have no doubt I can manage it then."

"Oh, thank you!" said Clementina. "It will be a great delight."

"And now," suggested Malcolm, "would you like to go through the village, and see some of the cottages, and how the fishers live?"

"If they would not think me inquisitive, or intrusive," answered Clementina.

"There is no danger of that," rejoined Malcolm. "If it were my Lady Bellair, to patronize, and deal praise and blame, as if what she calls poverty were fault and childishness, and she

their spiritual as well as social superior, they might very likely be what she would call rude. She was here once before, and we have some notion of her about the Seaton. I venture to say there is not a woman in it who is not her moral superior, and many of them are her superiors in intellect and true knowledge, if they are not so familiar with London scandal. Mr. Graham says that in the kingdom of heaven every superior is a ruler, for there to rule is to raise, and a man's rank is his power to uplift."

"I would I were in the kingdom of heaven, if it be such as you and Mr. Graham take it for," said Clementina.

"You must be in it, my lady, or you couldn't wish it to be such as it is."

"Can one then be in it, and yet seem to be out of it, Malcolm?"

"So many are out of it that seem to be in it, my lady, that one might well imagine it the other way with some."

"Are you not uncharitable, Malcolm?"

"Our Lord speaks of many coming up to his door confident of admission, whom yet he sends from him. Faith is obedience, not confidence."

"Then I do well to fear."

"Yes, my lady, so long as your fear makes you knock the louder."

"But if I be in, as you say, how can I go on knocking?"

"There are a thousand more doors to knock at after you are in, my lady. No one content to stand just inside the gate will be inside it long. But it is one thing to be in, and another to be satisfied that we are in. Such a satisfying as comes from our own feelings may, you see from what our Lord says, be a false one. It is one thing to gather the conviction for ourselves, and another to have it from God. What wise man would have it before he gives it? He who does what his Lord tells him, is in the kingdom, if every feeling of heart or brain told him he was out. And his Lord will see that he knows it one day. But I do not think, my lady, one can ever be quite sure, until the king himself has come in to sup with him, and has let him know that he is altogether one with him."

During the talk of which this is the substance, they reached the Seaton, and Malcolm took her to see his grandfather.

"Taal and faer and chentle and coot!" murmured the old man as he held her hand for a moment in his. With a start of suspicion he dropped it, and cried out in alarm—"She'll not pe a Cam'ell, Malcolm?"

"Na, na, daddy—far frae that," answered Malcolm.

"Then my laty will pe right welcome to Tuncan's heart," he replied, and taking her hand again led her to a chair.

When they left, she expressed herself charmed with the piper, but when she learned the cause of his peculiar behaviour at first, she looked grave, and found his feeling difficult to understand.

They next visited the Partaness, with whom she was far more amused than puzzled. But her heart was drawn to the young woman who sat in a corner, rocking her child in its wooden cradle, and never lifting her eyes from her needle-work: she knew her for the fisher-girl of Malcolm's picture.

From house to house he took her, and where they went, they were welcomed. If the man was smoking, he put away his pipe, and the

woman left her work and sat down to talk with her. They did the honours of their poor houses in a homely and dignified fashion. Clementina was delighted. But Malcolm told her he had taken her only to the best houses in the place to begin with. The village, though a fair sample of fishing villages, was no ex-sample, he said: there were all kinds of people in it as in every other. It was a class in the big life-school of the world, whose special masters were the sea and the herrings.

"What would you do now, if you were lord of the place?" asked Clementina, as they were walking back by the sea-gate; "—I mean, what would be the first thing you would do?"

"As it would be my business to know my tenants that I might rule them," he answered, "I would first court the society and confidence of the best men among them. I should be in no hurry to make changes, but would talk openly with them, and try to be worthy of their confidence. Of course I would see a little better to their houses, and improve their harbour; and I would build a boat for myself that would show them a better kind; but my main

hope for them would be the same as for myself —the knowledge of him whose is the sea and all its store, who cares for every fish in its bosom, but for the fisher more than many herrings. I would spend my best efforts to make them follow him whose first servants were the fishermen of Galilee, for with all my heart I believe that that Man holds the secret of life, and that only the man who obeys him can ever come to know the God who is the root and crown of our being, and whom to know is freedom and bliss."

A pause followed.

"But do you not sometimes find it hard to remember God all through your work?" asked Clementina.

"Not very hard, my lady. Sometimes I wake up to find that I have been in an evil mood and forgetting him, and then life is hard until I get near him again. But it is not my work that makes me forget him. When I go a-fishing, I go to catch God's fish; when I take Kelpie out, I am teaching one of God's wild creatures; when I read the Bible or Shakspere, I am listening to the word of God, uttered in each

after its kind. When the wind blows on my face, what matter that the chymist pulls it to pieces! He cannot hurt it, for his knowledge of it cannot make my feeling of it a folly, so long as he cannot pull that to pieces with his retorts and crucibles: it is to me the wind of him who makes it blow, the sign of something in him, the fit emblem of his spirit, that breathes into my spirit the breath of life. When Mr. Graham talks to me, it is a prophet come from God that teaches me, as certainly as if his fiery chariot were waiting to carry him back when he had spoken; for the word he utters at once humbles and uplifts my soul, telling it that God is all in all and my God—that the Lord Christ is the truth and the life, and the way home to the Father."

After a little pause,

"And when you are talking to a rich, ignorant, proud lady?" said Clementina, "—what do you feel then?"

"That I would it were my Lady Clementina instead," answered Malcolm with a smile.

She held her peace.

When he left her, Malcolm hurried to Scaur-

nose, and arranged with Blue Peter for his boat and crew the next night. Returning to his grandfather, he found a note waiting him from Mrs. Courthope, to the effect that, as Miss Caley, her ladyship's maid, had preferred another room, there was no reason why, if he pleased, he should not re-occupy his own.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EVE OF THE CRISIS.

IT was late in the sweetest of summer mornings when the Partan's boat slipped slowly back with a light wind to the harbour of Portlossie. Malcolm did not wait to land the fish, but having changed his clothes and taken breakfast with Duncan who was always up early, went to look after Kelpie. When he had done with her, finding some of the household already in motion, he went through the kitchen, and up the old cork-screw stone stair to his room to have the sleep he generally had before his breakfast. Presently came a knock at his door, and there was Rose.

The girl's behaviour to Malcolm was much changed. The conviction had been strengthening in her that he was not what he seemed,

and she regarded him now with a vague awe. She looked this way and that along the passage, with fear in her eyes, then stepped timidly inside the room to tell him, in a hurried whisper, that she had seen the woman who gave her the poisonous philtre, talking to Caley the night before, at the foot of the bridge, after everybody else was in bed. She had been miserable till she could warn him. He thanked her heartily, and said he would be on his guard; he would neither eat nor drink in the house. She crept softly away. He secured his door, lay down, and trying to think, feel asleep.

When he woke his brain was clear. The very next day, whether Lenorme came or not, he would declare himself. That night he would go fishing with Lady Clementina, but not one day longer would he allow those people to be about his sister. Who could tell what might not be brewing, or into what abyss, with the help of her *friends*, the woman Catanach might not plunge Florimel?

He rose, took Kelpie out, and had a good gallop. On his way back he saw in the distance Florimel riding with Liftore. The earl

was on his father's bay mare. He could not endure the sight, and dashed home at full speed.

Learning from Rose that Lady Clementina was in the flower-garden, he found her at the swan-basin, feeding the gold and silver fishes. An under-gardener, who had been about the place for thirty years, was at work not far off. The light splash of the falling column which the marble swan spouted from its upturned beak, prevented her from hearing his approach until he was close behind her. She turned, and her fair face took the flush of a white rose.

"My lady," he said, "I have got everything arranged for to-night."

"And when shall we go?" she asked eagerly.

"At the turn of the tide, about half-past seven. But seven is your dinner hour."

"It is of no consequence.—But could you not make it half an hour later, and then I should not seem rude?"

"Make it any hour you please, my lady, so long as the tide is falling."

"Let it be eight then, and dinner will be almost over. They will not miss me after that.

Mr. Cairns is going to dine with them. I think, except Liftore, I never disliked a man so much. Shall I tell them where I am going?"

"Yes, my lady. It will be better.—They will look amazed—for all their breeding!"

"Whose boat is it, that I may be able to tell them if they should ask me?"

"Joseph Mair's. He and his wife will come and fetch you. Annie Mair will go with us—if I may say *us:* will you allow me to go in your boat, my lady?"

"I couldn't go without you, Malcolm."

"Thank you, my lady, Indeed I don't know how I could let you go without me! Not that there is anything to fear, or that I could make it the least safer; but somehow it seems my business to take care of you."

"Like Kelpie?" said Clementina, with a merrier smile than he had ever seen on her face before.

"Yes, my lady," answered Malcolm; "—if to do for you all and the best you will permit me to do, be to take care of you like Kelpie, then so it is."

Clementina gave a little sigh.

"Mind you don't scruple, my lady, to give what orders you please. It will be *your* fishing-boat for to-night."

Clementina bowed her head in acknowledgment.

"And now, my lady," Malcolm went on, "just look about you for a moment. See this great vault of heaven, full of golden light raining on trees and flowers—every atom of air shining, Take the whole into your heart, that you may feel the difference at night, my lady—when the stars, and neither sun nor moon, will be in the sky, and all the flowers they shine on will be their own flitting, blinking, swinging, shutting and opening reflections in the swaying floor of the ocean,—when the heat will be gone, and the air clean and clear as the thoughts of a saint."

Clementina did as he said, and gazed above and around her on the glory of the summer day overhanging the sweet garden, and on the flowers that had just before been making her heart ache with their unattainable secret. But she thought with herself that if Malcolm and she but shared it with a common heart as well as neighboured

eyes, gorgeous day and ethereal night, or snow-clad wild and sky of stormy blackness, were alike welcome to her spirit.

As they talked they wandered up the garden and had drawn near the spot where, in the side of the glen, was hollowed the cave of the hermit. They now turned towards the pretty arbour of moss that covered its entrance, each thinking the other led, but Malcolm not without reluctance. For how horribly and unaccountably had he not been shaken, the only time he ever entered it, at sight of the hermit! The thing was a foolish wooden figure, no doubt, but the thought that it still sat over its book in the darkest corner of the cave, ready to rise and advance with outstretched hand to welcome its visitor, had, ever since then, sufficed to make him shudder. He was on the point of warning Clementina lest she too should be worse than startled, when he was arrested by the voice of John Jack, the old gardener, who came stooping after them, looking a sexton of flowers.

"Ma'colm, Ma'colm!" he cried, and crept up wheezing. "—I beg yer leddyship's pardon, my leddy, but I wadna ha'e Ma'colm lat ye

gang in there ohn tellt ye what there is inside."

"Thank you, John. I was just going to tell my lady," said Malcolm.

"Because, ye see," pursued John, "I was ae day here i' the gairden—an' I was jist graftin' a bonny wull rose-buss wi' a Hector o' France—an' it grew to be the bonniest rose-buss in a' the haill gairden—whan the markis, no the auld markis, but my leddy's father, cam' up the walk there, an' a bonny yoong leddy wi' his lordship, as it micht be yersel's twa—an' I beg yer pardon, my leddy, but I'm an auld man noo, an' whiles forgets the differs 'atween fowk—an' this yoong leddy 'at they ca'd Miss Cam'ell—ye kenned her yersel' efterhin', I daursay, Ma'colm—he was unco ta'en with her, the markis, as ilka body cud see ohn luikit that near, sae 'at some said 'at hoo he hed no richt to gang on wi' her that gait, garrin' her believe, gien he wasna gaein' to merry her. That's naither here nor there, hooever, seein' it a' cam' to jist naething ava'. Sae up they gaed to the cave yon'er, as I was tellin' ye; an' hoo it was, was a won'er, for I s' warran' she had been aboot the place

near a towmon (*twelvemonth*), but never had she been intil that cave, and kenned no more nor the bairn unborn what there was in 't. An' sae whan the airemite, as the auld minister ca'd him, though what for he ca'd a muckle block like yon an *airy mite*, I'm sure I never cud fathom—whan he gat up, as I was sayin', an' cam' foret wi' his han' oot, she gae a scraich 'at jist garred my lugs dirl, an' doon she drappit, an' there, whan I ran up, was she lyin' i' the markis his airms, as white 's a cauk eemage, an' it was lang or he broucht her till hersel', for he wadna lat me rin for the hoosekeeper, but sent me fleein' to the f'untain for watter, an gi'ed me a gowd guinea to haud my tongue aboot it a'. Sae noo, my leddy, ye're forewarnt, an' no ill can come to ye, for there's naething to be fleyt at whan ye ken what's gauin' to meet ye."

Malcolm had turned his head aside, and now moved on without remark. Struck by his silence, Clementina looked up, and saw his face very pale, and the tears standing in his eyes.

"You must tell me the sad story, Malcolm," she murmured. "I could scarcely understand a word the old man said."

He continued silent, and seemed struggling with some emotion. But when they were within a few paces of the arbour, he stopped short, and said,

"I would rather not go in there to-day. You would oblige me, my lady, if you would not go."

She looked up at him again, with wonder but more concern in her lovely face, put her hand on his arm, gently turned him away, and walked back with him to the fountain. Not a word more did she say about the matter.

CHAPTER XII.

SEA.

THE evening came; and the company at Lossie House was still seated at table, Clementina heartily weary of the vapid talk that had been going on all through the dinner, when she was informed that a fisherman of the name of Mair was at the door, accompanied by his wife, saying they had an appointment with her. She had already acquainted her hostess, when first they sat down, with her arrangements for going a-fishing that night, and much foolish talk and would-be wit had followed; now, when she rose and excused herself, they all wished her a pleasant evening, in a tone indicating the conviction that she little knew what she was about, and would soon be longing heartily enough to be back with them in the drawing-

room, whose lighted windows she would see from the boat. But Clementina hoped otherwise, hurriedly changed her dress, hastened to join Malcolm's messengers, and almost in a moment had made the two child-like people at home with her, by the simplicity and truth of her manner, and the directness of her utterance. They had not talked with her five minutes before they said in their hearts that here was the wife for the marquis if he could get her.

"She's jist like ane o' oorsel's," whispered Annie to her husband on the first opportunity, "only a hantle better an' bonnier."

They took the nearest way to the harbour—through the town, and Lady Clementina and Blue Peter kept up a constant talk as they went. All in the streets and at the windows stared to see the grand lady from the House walking between a Scaurnose fisherman and his wife, and chatting away with them as if they were all fishers together.

"What's the wordle comin' till!" cried Mrs. Mellis, the draper's wife, as she saw them pass.

"I'm glaid to see the yoong wuman—an' a bonny lass she is!—in sic guid company," said

Miss Horn, looking down from the opposite side of the way. "I'm thinkin' the han' o' the markis 'ill be i' this, no' !"

All was ready to receive her, but in the present bad state of the harbour, and the tide having now ebbed a little way, the boat could not get close either to quay or shore. Six of the crew were on board, seated on the thwarts with their oars shipped, for Peter had insisted on a certain approximation to man-of-war manners and discipline for the evening, or at least until they got to the fishing ground. The shore itself formed one side of the harbour, and sloped down into it, and on the sand stood Malcolm with a young woman, whom Clementina recognised at once as the girl she had seen at the Findlays'.

"My lady," he said, approaching, "would you do me the favour to let Lizzy go with you? She would like to attend your ladyship, because, being a fisherman's daughter, she is used to the sea, and Mrs. Mair is not so much at home upon it, being a farmer's daughter from inland."

Receiving Clementina's thankful assent, he turned to Lizzy and said,

"Min' ye tell my lady what rizon ye ken whaurfor my mistress at the Hoose sudna be merried upo' Lord Liftore—him 'at was Lord Meikleham. Ye may speyk to my lady there as ye wad to mysel'—an' better, haein' the hert o' a wuman."

Lizzy blushed a deep red, and dared but the glimmer of a glance at Clementina, but there was only shame, no annoyance in her face.

"Ye winna repent it, Lizzy," concluded Malcolm, and turned away.

He cherished a faint hope that, if she heard or guessed Lizzy's story, Clementina might yet find some way of bringing her influence to bear on his sister even at the last hour of her chance —from which, for her sake, he shrunk the more the nearer it drew. Clementina held out her hand to Lizzy, and again accepted her offered service with kindly thanks.

Now Blue Peter, having been ship's-carpenter in his day, had constructed a little poop in the stern of his craft; thereon Malcolm had laid cushions and pillows and furs and blankets from the Psyche,—a grafting of Cleopatra's galley upon the rude fishing-boat—and there

Clementina was to repose in state. Malcolm gave a sign: Peter took his wife in his arms, and walking through the few yards of water between, lifted her into the boat, which lay with its stern to the shore. Malcolm and Clementina turned to each other: he was about to ask leave to do her the same service, but she spoke before him.

"Put Lizzy on board first," she said.

He obeyed, and when, returning, he again approached her—

"Are you able, Malcolm?" she asked. "I am very heavy."

He smiled for all reply, took her in his arms like a child, and had placed her on the cushions before she had time to realize the mode of her transference. Then taking a stride deeper into the water, he scrambled on board. The same instant the men gave way. They pulled carefully through the narrow jaws of the little harbour, and away, with quivering oar and falling tide, went the boat, gliding out into the measureless north, where the horizon was now dotted with the sails that had preceded it.

No sooner were they afloat than a kind of

enchantment enwrapped and possessed the soul of Clementina. Everything seemed all at once changed utterly. The very ends of the harbour piers might have stood in the Divina Commedia instead of the Moray Frith. Oh that wonderful look everything wears when beheld from the other side! Wonderful surely will this world appear—strangely *more*, when, become children again by being gathered to our fathers—joyous day! we turn and gaze back upon it from the other side! I imagine that, to him who has overcome it, the world, in very virtue of his victory, will show itself the lovely and pure thing it was created—for he will see through the cloudy envelope of his battle to the living kernel below. The cliffs, the rocks, the sands, the dune, the town, the very clouds that hung over the hill above Lossie House, were in strange fashion transfigured. To think of people sitting behind those windows while the splendour and freedom of space with all its divine shows invited them—lay bare and empty to them! Out and still out they rowed and drifted, till the coast began to open up beyond the headlands on either side. There a light breeze was wait-

ing them. Up then went three short masts, and three dark-brown sails shone red in the sun, and Malcolm came aft, over the great heap of brown nets, crept with apology across the poop, and got down into a little well behind, there to sit and steer the boat; for now, obedient to the wind in its sails, it went frolicking over the sea.

The Bonnie Annie bore a picked crew; for Peter's boat was to him a sort of church, in which he would not, with his will, carry any Jonah fleeing from the will of the lord of the sea. And that boat's crew did not look the less merrily out of their blue eyes, or carry themselves less manfully in danger, that they believed a lord of the earth and the sea and the fountains of water cared for his children, and would have them honest and fearless.

And now came a scattering of rubies and topazes over the slow waves, as the sun reached the edge of the horizon, and shone with a glory of blinding red along the heaving level of green, dashed with the foam of their flight. Could such a descent as this be intended for a type of death? Clementina asked. Was it not rather

as if, from a corner of the tomb behind, she saw the back parts of a resurrection and ascension: warmth, outshining, splendour; departure from the door of the tomb; exultant memory; tarnishing gold, red fading to russet; fainting of spirit, loneliness; deepening blue and green; pallor, grayness, coldness; out-creeping stars; further-reaching memory; the dawn of infinite hope and foresight; the assurance that under passion itself lay a better and holier mystery? Here was God's naughty child, the world, laid asleep and dreaming—if not merrily, yet contentedly; and there was the sky with all the day gathered and hidden up in its blue, ready to break forth again in laughter on the morrow, bending over its skyey cradle like a mother! and there was the aurora, the secret of life, creeping away round to the north to be ready! Then first, when the slow twilight had fairly settled into night, did Clementina begin to know the deepest marvel of this facet of the rosé-diamond, life! God's night and sky and sea were hers now, as they had been Malcolm's from childhood! And when the nets had been paid out, and sunk straight into the deep,

stretched betwixt leads below and floats and buoys above, extending a screen of meshes against the rush of the watery herd; when the sails were down, and the whole vault of stars laid bare to her eyes as she lay; when the boat was still, fast to the nets, anchored as it were by hanging acres of curtain, and all was silent as a church, waiting, and she might dream or sleep or pray as she would, with nothing about her but peace and love and the deep sea, and over her but still peace and love and the deeper sky, then the soul of Clementina rose and worshipped the soul of the universe; her spirit clave to the Life of her life, the Thought of her thought, the Heart of her heart; her will bowed itself to the creator of will, worshipping the supreme, original, only Freedom—the Father of her love, the Father of Jesus Christ, the God of the hearts of the universe, the Thinker of all thoughts, the Beginner of all beginnings, the All-in-all. It was her first experience of speechless adoration.

Most of the men were asleep in the bows of the boat; all were lying down but one. That one was Malcolm. He had come aft, and seated himself under the platform, leaning against it.

The boat rose and sank a little, just enough to rock the sleeping children a little deeper into their sleep; Malcolm thought all slept. He did not see how Clementina's eyes shone back to the heavens—no star in them to be named beside those eyes. She knew that Malcolm was near her, but she would not speak; she would not break the peace of the presence. A minute or two passed. Then softly woke a murmur of sound, that strengthened and grew, and swelled at last into a song. She feared to stir lest she should interrupt its flow. And thus it flowed:

The stars are steady abune;
I' the water they flichter an' flee;
But steady aye luikin' doon,
They ken themsel's i' the sea.

A' licht, an' clear, an' free,
God, thou shinest abune;
Yet luik, an' see thysel' in me,
God, whan thou luikest doon.

A silence followed, but a silence that seemed about to be broken. And again Malcolm sang:

There was an auld fisher—he sat by the wa',
An' luikit oot ower the sea;
The bairnies war playin', he smilit on them a',
But the tear stude in his e'e.
An' it's oh to win awa', awa'!
An' it's oh to win awa'
Whaur the bairns come hame, an' the wives they bide,
An' God is the Father o' a'!

Jocky an' Jeamy an' Tammy oot there,
A' i' the boatie gaed doon;
An' I'm ower auld to fish ony mair,
An' I hinna the chance to droon.
An' it's oh to win awa', awa'! &c.

An' Jeanie she grat to ease her hert,
An' she easit hersel' awa';
But I'm ower auld for the tears to stert,
An' sae the sighs maun blaw.
An' it's oh to win awa', awa'! &c.

Lord, steer me hame whaur my Lord has steerit,
For I'm tired o' life's rockin' sea;
An' dinna be lang, for I'm nearhan' fearit
'At I'm 'maist ower auld to dee.
An' it's oh to win awa', awa'! &c.

Again the stars and the sky were all, and there was no sound but the slight murmurous lipping of the slow swell against the edges of the planks. Then Clementina said:

"Did you make that song, Malcolm?"

"Whilk o' them, my leddy?—But it's a' ane—they're baith mine, sic as they are."

"Thank you," she returned.

"What for, my leddy?"

"For speaking Scotch to me."

"I beg your pardon, my lady. I forgot your ladyship was English."

"Please forget it," she said. "But I thank you for your songs too. It was the second I wanted to know about; the first I was certain

was your own. I did not know you could enter like that into the feelings of an old man."

"Why not, my lady? I never can see living thing without asking it how it feels. Often and often, out here at such a time as this, have I tried to fancy myself a herring caught by the gills in the net down below, instead of the fisherman in the boat above going to haul him out."

"And did you succeed?"

"Well, I fancy I came to understand as much of him as he does himself. It's a merry enough life down there. The flukes—plaice, you call them, my lady,—bother me, I confess. I never contemplate one without feeling as if I had been sat upon when I was a baby. But for an old man!—Why, that's what I shall be myself one day most likely, and it would be a shame not to know pretty nearly how *he* felt—near enough at least to make a song about him."

"And shan't you mind being an old man, then, Malcolm?"

"Not in the least, my lady. I shall mind nothing so long as I can trust in the maker of me.

If my faith in him should give way—why then there would be nothing worth minding either! I don't know but I should kill myself."

"Malcolm!"

"Which is worse, my lady—to distrust God, or to think life worth having without him?"

"But one may hope in the midst of doubt—at least that is what Mr. Graham—and you—have taught me to do."

"Yes, surely, my lady. I won't let anyone beat me at that, if I can help it. And I think that so long as I kept my reason, I should be able to cry out, as that grandest and most human of all the prophets did—'Though he slay me yet will I trust in him.' But would you not like to sleep, my lady?"

"No, Malcolm. I would much rather hear you talk.—Could you not tell me a story now? Lady Lossie mentioned one you once told her about an old castle somewhere not far from here——"

"Eh, my leddy!" broke in Annie Mair, who had waked up while they were speaking, "I wuss ye wad gar him tell ye that story, for my man he's h'ard 'im tell't, an' he says it's unco

gruesome: I wad fain hear 't.—Wauk up, Lizzy," she went on, in her eagerness waiting for no answer; "Ma'colm's gauin' to tell 's the tale o' the auld castel o' Colonsay.—It's oot by yon'er, my leddy—no that far frae the Deid Heid.—Wauk up, Lizzy."

"I'm no sleepin', Annie," said Lizzy, "—though like Ma'colm's auld man," she added with a sigh, "I wad whiles fain be."

Now there were reasons why Malcolm should not be unwilling to tell the strange wild story requested of him, and he commenced it at once, but modified the Scotch of it considerably for the sake of the unaccustomed ears. When it was ended, Clementina said nothing; Annie Mair said "Hech, sirs!" and Lizzy, with a great sigh, remarked,

"The deil maun be in a'thing whaur God hasna a han', I'm thinkin'."

"Ye may tak yer aith upo' that," rejoined Malcolm.

It was a custom in Peter's boat never to draw the nets without a prayer, uttered now by one, now by another of the crew. Upon this occasion, whether it was in deference to Malcolm,

who, as he well understood, did not like long prayers, or that the presence of Clementina exercised some restraint upon his spirit, out of the bows of the boat came now the solemn voice of its master, bearing only this one sentence:

"Oh Thoo, wha didst tell thy dissiples to cast the net upo' the side whaur swam the fish, gien it be thy wull 'at we catch the nicht, lat 's catch; gien it binna thy wull, lat 's no catch.—Haul awa', my laads."

Up sprang the men, and went each to his place, and straight a torrent of gleaming fish was pouring in over the gunwale of the boat. Such a take it was ere the last of the nets was drawn, as the oldest of them had seldom seen. Thousands of fish there were that had never got into the meshes at all.

"I cannot understand it," said Clementina. "There are multitudes more fish than there are meshes in the nets to catch them: if they are not caught, why do they not swim away?"

"Because they are drowned, my lady," answered Malcolm.

"What do you mean by that? How can you drown a fish?"

"You may call it *suffocated* if you like, my lady; it is all the same. You have read of panic-stricken people, when a church or a theatre is on fire, rushing to the door all in a heap, and crowding each other to death? It is something like that with the fish. They are swimming along in a great shoal, yards thick; and when the first can get no farther, that does not at once stop the rest, any more than it would in a crowd of people; those that are behind come pressing up into every corner where there is room, till they are one dense mass. Then they push and push to get forward, and can't get through, and the rest come still crowding on behind and above and below, till a multitude of them are jammed so tight against each other that they can't open their gills; and even if they could, there would not be air enough for them. You've seen the goldfish in the swan-basin, my lady, how they open and shut their gills constantly: that's their way of getting air out of the water by some wonderful contrivance nobody understands, for they need breath just as much as we do; and to close their gills is to them the same as closing a man's mouth and

nose. That's how the most of those herrings are taken."

All were now ready to seek the harbour. A light westerly wind was still blowing, with the aid of which, heavy-laden, they crept slowly to the land. As she lay snug and warm, with the cool breath of the sea on her face, a half sleep came over Clementina, and she half dreamed that she was voyaging in a ship of the air, through infinite regions of space, with a destination too glorious to be known. The herring-boat was a living splendour of strength and speed, its sails were as the wings of a will, in place of the instruments of a force, and softly as mightily it bore them through the charmed realms of dreamland towards the ideal of the soul. And yet the herring-boat but crawled over the still waters with its load of fish, as the harvest waggon creeps over the field with its piled up sheaves; and she who imagined its wondrous speed was the only one who did not desire it should move faster. No word passed between her and Malcolm all their homeward way. Each was brooding over the night and its joy that enclosed them together, and hoping

for that which was yet to be shaken from the lap of the coming time.

Also Clementina had in her mind a scheme for attempting what Malcolm had requested of her; the next day must see it carried into effect; and ever and anon, like a cold blast of doubt invading the bliss of confidence, into the heart of that sea-borne peace darted the thought, that, if she failed, she must leave at once for England, for she would not again meet Liftore.

CHAPTER XIII.

SHORE.

AT last they glided once more through the stony jaws of the harbour, as if returning again to the earth from a sojourn in the land of the disembodied. When Clementina's foot touched the shore she felt like one waked out of a dream, from whom yet the dream has not departed—but keeps floating about him, waved in thinner and yet thinner streams from the wings of the vanishing sleep. It seemed almost as if her spirit, instead of having come back to the world of its former abode, had been borne across the parting waters and landed on the shore of the immortals. There was the ghost-like harbour of the spirit land, the water gleaming betwixt its dark walls, one solitary boat motionless upon it, the men moving about like

shadows in the star twilight! Here stood three women and a man on the shore, and save the stars no light shone, and from the land came no sound of life. Was it the dead of the night, or a day that had no sun? It was not dark, but the light was rayless. Or, rather, it was as if she had gained the power of seeing in the dark. Suppressed sleep wove the stuff of a dream around her, and the stir at her heart kept it alive with dream-forms. Even the voice of Peter's Annie, saying, "I s' bide for my man. Gude nicht, my leddy," did not break the charm. Her heart shaped that also into the dream. Turning away with Malcolm and Lizzy, she passed along the front of the Seaton. How still, how dead, how empty like cenotaphs, all the cottages looked! How the sea which lay like a watcher at their doors, murmured in its sleep! Arrived at the entrance to her own close, Lizzy next bade them good night, and Clementina and Malcolm were left.

And now drew near the full power, the culmination of the mounting enchantment of the night for Malcolm. When once the Scaurnose people should have passed them, they would

be alone—alone as in the spaces between the stars. There would not be a living soul on the shore for hours. From the harbour the nearest way to the House was by the sea-gate, but where was the haste—with the lovely night around them, private as a dream shared only by two? Besides, to get in by that, they would have had to rouse the cantankerous Bykes, and what a jar would not that bring into the music of the silence! Instead, therefore, of turning up by the side of the stream where it crossed the shore, he took Clementina once again in his arms unforbidden, and carried her over. Then the long sands lay open to their feet. Presently they heard the Scaurnose party behind them, coming audibly, merrily on. As by a common resolve they turned to the left, and crossing the end of the Boar's Tail, resumed their former direction, with the dune now between them and the sea. The voices passed on the other side, and they heard them slowly merge into the inaudible. At length, after an interval of silence, on the westerly air came one quiver of laughter —by which Malcolm knew his friends were winding up the red path to the top of the cliff.

And now the shore was bare of presence, bare of sound save the soft fitful rush of the rising tide. But behind the long sandhill, for all they could see of the sea, they might have been in the heart of a continent.

"Who would imagine the ocean so near us, my lady!" said Malcolm, after they had walked for some time without word spoken.

"Who can tell what may be near us?" she returned.

"True, my lady. Our future is near us, holding thousands of things unknown. Hosts of thinking beings with endless myriads of thoughts may be around us. What a joy to know that, of all things and all thoughts, God is nearest to us—*so* near that we cannot see him, but, far beyond seeing him, can know of him infinitely!"

As he spoke they came opposite the tunnel, but he turned from it and they ascended the dune. As their heads rose over the top, and the sky-night above and the sea-night beneath rolled themselves out and rushed silently together, Malcolm said, as if thinking aloud:

"Thus shall we meet death and the unknown,

and the new that breaks from the bosom of the invisible will be better than the old upon which the gates close behind us. The Son of man is content with my future, and I am content."

There was a peace in the words that troubled Clementina: he wanted no more than he had —this cold, imperturbable, devout fisherman! She did not see that it was the confidence of having all things that held his peace rooted. From the platform of the swivel, they looked abroad over the sea. Far north in the east lurked a suspicion of dawn, which seemed, while they gazed upon it, to "languish into life," and the sea was a shade less dark than when they turned from it to go behind the dune. They descended a few paces, and halted again.

"Did your ladyship ever see the sun rise?" asked Malcolm.

"Never in open country," she answered.

"Then stay and see it now, my lady. He'll rise just over yonder, a little nearer this way than that light from under his eyelids. A more glorious chance you could not have. And when

he rises, just observe, one minute after he is up, how like a dream all you have been in to-night will look. It is to me strange even to awfulness how many different phases of things, and feelings about them, and moods of life and consciousness, God can tie up in the bundle of one world with one human soul to carry it."

Clementina slowly sank on the sand of the slope, and like lovely sphinx of northern desert, gazed in immovable silence out on the yet more northern sea. Malcolm took his place a little below, leaning on his elbow, for the slope was steep, and looking up at her. Thus they waited the sunrise.

Was it minutes or only moments passed in that silence—whose speech was the soft ripple of the sea on the sand? Neither could have answered the question. At length said Malcolm,

"I think of changing my service, my lady."

"Indeed, Malcolm!"

"Yes, my lady. My—mistress does not like to turn me away, but she is tired of me, and does not want me any longer."

"But you would never think of finally forsak-

ing a fisherman's life for that of a servant, surely, Malcolm?"

"What would become of Kelpie, my lady?" rejoined Malcolm, smiling to himself.

"Ah!" said Clementina, bewildered; "I had not thought of her.—But you cannot take her with you," she added, coming a little to her senses.

"There is nobody about the place who could, or rather, who would do anything with her. They would sell her. I have enough to buy her, and perhaps somebody might not object to the encumbrance, but hire me and her together. —*Your* groom wants a coachman's place, my lady."

"Oh Malcolm! do you mean you would be *my* groom?" cried Clementina, pressing her palms together.

"If you would have me, my lady; but I have heard you say you would have none but a married man?"

"But—Malcolm—don't you know anybody that would—?—Could you not find some one—some lady—that—?—I mean, why shouldn't you be a married man?"

"For a very good and to me rather sad reason, my lady: the only woman I could marry, or should ever be able to marry,—would not have me. She is very kind and very noble, but—it is preposterous—the thing is too preposterous. I dare not have the presumption to ask her."

Malcolm's voice trembled as he spoke, and a few moments' pause followed, during which he could not lift his eyes. The whole heaven seemed pressing down their lids. The breath which he modelled into words seemed to come in little billows.

But his words had raised a storm in Clementina's bosom. A cry broke from her, as if driven forth by pain. She called up all the energy of her nature, and stilled herself to speak. The voice that came was little more than a sob-scattered whisper, but to her it seemed as if all the world must hear.

"Oh Malcolm!" she panted, "I *will* try to be good and wise. Don't marry anybody else—*anybody*, I mean; but come with Kelpie and be my groom, and wait and see if I don't grow better."

Malcolm leaped to his feet and threw himself at hers. He had heard but in part, and he *must* know all.

"My lady," he said, with intense quiet, "Kelpie and I will be your slaves. Take me for fisherman—groom—what you will. I offer the whole sum of service that is in me." He kissed her feet. "My lady, I would put your feet on my head," he went on, "only then what should I do when I see my Lord, and cast myself before *him*?"

But Clementina, again her own to give, rose quickly, and said with all the dignity born of her inward grandeur,

"Rise, Malcolm; you misunderstand me."

Malcolm rose abashed, but stood erect before her, save that his head was bowed, for his heart was sunk in dismay. Then slowly, gently, Clementina knelt before him. He was bewildered, and thought she was going to pray. In sweet, clear, unshaken tones, for she feared nothing now, she said,

"Malcolm, I am not worthy of you. But take me—take my very soul if you will, for it is yours."

Now Malcolm saw that he had no right to raise a kneeling lady; all he could do was to kneel beside her. When people kneel, they lift up their hearts; and the creating heart of their joy was forgotten of neither. And well for them, for the love where God is not, be the lady lovely as Cordelia, the man gentle as Philip Sidney, will fare as the overkept manna.

When the huge tidal wave from the ocean of infinite delight had broken at last upon the shore of the finite, and withdrawn again into the deeps, leaving every cistern brimming, every fountain overflowing, the two entranced souls opened their bodily eyes, looked at each other, rose, and stood hand in hand, speechless.

"Ah, my lady!" said Malcolm at length, "what is to become of this delicate smoothness in my great rough hand? Will it not be hurt?"

"You don't know how strong it is, Malcolm. There!"

"I can scarcely feel it with my hand, my lady; it all goes through to my heart. It shall lie in mine as the diamond in the rock."

"No, no, Malcolm! Now that I am going to

be a fisherman's wife, it must be a strong hand —it must work. What homage shall you require of me, Malcolm? What will you have me do to rise a little nearer your level? Shall I give away lands and money? And shall I live with you in the Seaton? or will you come and fish at Wastbeach?"

"Forgive me, my lady; I can't think about things now—even with you in them. There is neither past nor future to me now—only this one eternal morning. Sit here, and look up, Lady Clementina:—see all those worlds:—something in me constantly says that I shall know every one of them one day; that they are all but rooms in the house of my spirit, that is, the house of our Father. Let us not now, when your love makes me twice eternal, talk of times and places. Come, let us fancy ourselves two blessed spirits, lying full in the sight and light of our God,—as indeed what else are we?—warming our hearts in his presence and peace; and that we have but to rise and spread our wings to soar aloft and find—what shall it be, my lady? Worlds upon worlds? No, no. What are worlds upon

worlds in infinite show until we have seen the face of the Son of Man!"

A silence fell. But he resumed.

"Let us imagine our earthly life behind us, our hearts clean, love all in all.—But that sends me back to the now. My lady, I know I shall never love you aright until you have helped me perfect. When the face of the least lovely of my neighbours needs but appear to rouse in my heart a divine tenderness, then it must be that I shall love you better than now. Now, alas! I am so pervious to wrong! so fertile of resentments and indignations! You must cure me, my divine Clemency.—Am I a poor lover to talk, this first glorious hour, of anything but my lady and my love? Ah! but let it excuse me that this love is no new thing to me. It is a very old love. I have loved you a thousand years. I love every atom of your being, every thought that can harbour in your soul, and I am jealous of hurting your blossoms with the over-jubilant winds of that very love. I would therefore ever behold you folded in the atmosphere of the Love eternal. My lady, if I were to talk of your beauty, I should but offend you, for

you would think I raved, and spoke not the words of truth and soberness. But how often have I not cried to the God who breathed the beauty into you that it might shine out of you, to save my soul from the tempest of its own delight therein. And now I am like one that has caught an angel in his net, and fears to come too nigh, lest fire should flash from the eyes of the startled splendour, and consume the net and him who holds it. But I will not rave, because I would possess in grand peace that which I lay at your feet. I am yours, and would be worthy of your moonlight calm."

"Alas! I am beside you but a block of marble!" said Clementina. "You are so eloquent, my——"

"New groom," suggested Malcolm gently.

Clementina smiled.

"But my heart is so full," she went on, "that I cannot think the filmiest thought. I hardly know that I feel. I only know that I want to weep."

"Weep then, my word ineffable!" cried Malcolm, and laid himself again at her feet, kissed them, and was silent.

He was but a fisher poet; no courtier, no darling of society, no dealer in fine speeches, no clerk of compliments. All the words he had were the living blossoms of thought rooted in feeling. His pure clear heart was as a crystal cup, through which shone the red wine of his love. To himself, Malcolm stammered as a dumb man, the string of whose tongue has but just been loosed; to Clementina his speech was as the song of the Lady to Comus, "divine enchanting ravishment." The God of truth is surely present at every such marriage feast of two radiant spirits. Their joy was that neither had fooled the hope of the other.

And so the herring boat had indeed carried Clementina over into paradise, and this night of the world was to her a twilight of heaven. God alone can tell what delights it is possible for him to give to the pure in heart who shall one day behold him. Like two that had died and found each other, they talked until speech rose into silence, they smiled until the dews which the smiles had sublimed claimed their turn and descended in tears.

All at once they became aware that an eye

was upon them. It was the sun. He was ten degrees up the slope of the sky, and they had never seen him rise.

With the sun came a troublous thought, for with the sun came "a world of men." Neither they nor the simple fisher folk, their friends, had thought of the thing, but now at length it occurred to Clementina that she would rather not walk up to the door of Lossie House with Malcolm at this hour of the morning. Yet neither could she well appear alone. Ere she had spoken Malcolm rose.

"You won't mind being left, my lady," he said, "for a quarter of an hour or so—will you? I want to bring Lizzy to walk home with you."

He went, and Clementina sat alone on the dune in a reposeful rapture, to which the sleeplessness of the night gave a certain additional intensity and richness and strangeness. She watched the great strides of her fisherman as he walked along the sands, and she seemed not to be left behind, but to go with him every step. The tide was again falling, and the sea shone and sparkled and danced with life, and the wet sand gleamed, and a soft air blew on her cheek,

and the lordly sun was mounting higher and higher, and a lark over her head was sacrificing all nature in his song; and it seemed as if Malcolm were still speaking strange, half intelligible, altogether lovely things in her ears. She felt a little weary, and laid her head down upon her arm to listen more at her ease.

Now the lark had seen all and heard all, and was telling it again to the universe, only in dark sayings which none but themselves could understand; therefore it is no wonder that, as she listened, his song melted into a dream, and she slept. And the dream was lovely as dream needs be, but not lovelier than the wakeful night. She opened her eyes, calm as any cradled child, and there stood her fisherman!

"I have been explaining to Lizzy, my lady," he said, "that your ladyship would rather have her company up to the door than mine. Lizzy is to be trusted, my lady."

"'Deed, my leddy," said Lizzy, "Ma'colm's been ower guid to me, no to gar me du onything he wad ha'e o' me. I can haud my tongue whan I like, my leddy. An' dinna doobt my thouchts, my leddy, for I ken Ma'colm as weel's ye du yersel', my leddy."

While she was speaking, Clementina rose, and they went straight to the door in the bank. Through the tunnel and the young wood and the dew and the morning odours, along the lovely paths the three walked to the house together. And oh, how the larks of the earth and the larks of the soul sang for two of them! and how the burn rang with music, and the air throbbed with sweetest life! while the breath of God made a little sound as of a going now and then in the tops of the fir-trees, and the sun shone his brightest and best, and all nature knew that the heart of God is the home of his creatures.

When they drew near the house, Malcolm left them. After they had rung a good many times, the door was opened by the housekeeper, looking very proper and just a little scandalized.

"Please, Mrs. Courthope," said Lady Clementina, "will you give orders that when this young woman comes to see me to-day she shall be shown up to my room?"

Then she turned to Lizzy and thanked her for her kindness, and they parted—Lizzy to her

baby, and Clementina to yet a dream or two. Long before her dreams were sleeping ones, however, Malcolm was out in the bay in the Psyche's dinghy, catching mackerel: some should be for his grandfather, some for Miss Horn, some for Mrs. Courthope, and some for Mrs. Crathie.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CREW OF THE BONNIE ANNIE.

HAVING caught as many fish as he wanted, Malcolm rowed to the other side of the Scaurnose. There he landed and left the dinghy in the shelter of the rocks, the fish covered with long broad-leaved *tangles*, climbed the steep cliff, and sought Blue Peter. The brown village was quiet as a churchyard, although the sun was now growing hot. Of the men some were not yet returned from the night's fishing, and some were asleep in their beds after it. Not a chimney smoked. But Malcolm seemed to have in his own single being life and joy enough for a world; such an intense consciousness of bliss burned within him, that, in the sightless, motionless village, he seemed to himself to stand like an altar blazing in the

midst of desert Carnac. But he was not the only one awake: on the threshold of Peter's cottage sat his little Phemy, trying to polish a bit of serpentine marble upon the doorstep, with the help of water, which stood by her side in a broken tea-cup.

She lifted her sweet gray eyes, and smiled him a welcome.

"Are ye up a'ready, Phemy?" he said.

"I ha'ena been doon yet," she answered. "My mither was oot last nicht wi' the boat, an' Auntie Jinse was wi' the bairn, an' sae I cud du as I likit."

"An' what did ye like, Phemy?"

"A'body kens what I like," answered the child: "I was oot an' aboot a' nicht. An' eh, Ma'colm! I hed a veesion."

"What was that, Phemy?"

"I was upo' the tap o' the Nose, jist as the sun rase, luikin' aboot me, an' awa' upo' the Boar's Tail I saw twa angels sayin' their prayers. Nae doobt they war prayin' for the haill warl', i' the quaiet o' the mornin' afore the din begud. Maybe ane o' them was that auld priest wi' the lang name i' the buik o' Genesis,

'at hed naither father nor mither—puir man!—him 'at gaed aboot blissin' fowk."

Malcolm thought he might take his own time to set the child right, and asked her to go and tell her father that he wanted to see him. In a few minutes Blue Peter appeared, rubbing his eyes—one of the dead called too early from the tomb of sleep.

"Freen' Peter," said Malcolm, "I'm gaein' to speak oot the day."

Peter woke up.

"Weel," he said, "I *am* glaid o' that, Ma'colm,—I beg yer pardon, my lord, I sud say.—Annie!"

"Haud a quaiet sough, man. I wadna hae 't come oot at Scaurnose first. I'm come noo 'cause I want ye to stan' by me."

"I wull that, my lord."

"Weel, gang an' gether yer boat's crew, an' fess them doon to the cove, an' I'll tell them, an' maybe they'll stan' by me as weel."

"There's little fear o' that, gien I ken my men," answered Peter, and went off, rather less than half-clothed, the sun burning hot upon his back, through the sleeping village, to call

them, while Malcolm went and waited beside the dinghy.

At length six men in a body, and one lagging behind, appeared coming down the winding path—all but Peter no doubt wondering why they were called so soon from their beds, on such a peaceful morning, after being out the night before. Malcolm went to meet them.

"Freen's," he said, "I'm in want o' yer help."

"Onything ye like, Ma'colm, sae far 's I'm concernt, 'cep' it be to ride yer mere. That I wull no tak in han'," said Jeames Gentle.

"It's no that," returned Malcolm. "It's naething freely sae hard's that, I'm thinkin'. The hard 'ill be to believe what I'm gaein' to tell ye."

"Ye'll no be gaein' to set up for a proaphet?" said Girnel, with something approaching a sneer.

Girnel was the one who came down behind the rest.

"Na, na; naething like it," said Blue Peter.

"But first ye'll promise to haud yer tongues for half a day?" said Malcolm.

"Ay, ay; we'll no clype."—"We s' haud wer tongues," cried one and another and another, and all seemed to assent.

"Weel," said Malcolm, "my name 's no Ma'colm MacPhail, but——"

"We a' ken that," said Girnel.

"An' what mair du ye ken?" asked Blue Peter, with some anger at his interruption.

"Ow, naething."

"Weel, ye ken little," said Peter, and the rest laughed.

"I'm the Markis o' Lossie," said Malcolm.

Every man but Peter laughed again: all took it for a joke precursive of some serious announcement. That which it would have least surprised them to hear, would have been that he was a natural son of the late marquis.

"My name 's Ma'colm Colonsay," resumed Malcolm, quietly; "an' I'm the saxt Markis o' Lossie."

A dead silence followed, and in doubt, astonishment, bewilderment, and vague awe, accompanied in the case of two or three by a strong inclination to laugh, with which they struggled, belief began. Always a curious observer of

nel. "Whan I see the peppers, I'll ken what to du."

With a nod of the head as self-important as decisive, he turned his back.

"At all events," said Malcolm, "you will say nothing about it before you hear from one of us again?"

"I mak nae promises," answered Girnel, from behind his own back.

A howl arose from the rest.

"Ye promised a'ready," said Blue Peter.

"Na, I didna that. I said never a word."

"What right then had you to remain and listen to my disclosure?" said Malcolm. "If you be guilty of such a mean trick as betray me and ruin my plans, no honest man in Portlossie or Scaurnose but will scorn you."

"There! tak ye that!" said Peter. "An' I s' promise ye, ye s' never lay leg ower the gunnel o' *my* boat again. I s' hae nane but Christi-an men i' *my* pey."

"Ye hired me for the sizon, Blew Peter," said Girnel, turning defiantly.

"Oh! ye s' ha'e yer wauges. I'm no ane to creep oot o' a bargain, or say 'at I didna pro-

mise. Ye s' get yer reward, never fear. But into my boat ye s' no come. We'll ha'e nae Auchans i' oor camp. Eh, Girnel, man, but ye ha'e lost yersel' the day! He'll never loup far 'at winna lippen. The auld worthies tuik their life i' their han', but ye tak yer fit *(foot)* i' yours. I'm clean affrontit 'at ever I hed ye amo' my men."

But with that there rushed over Peter the recollection of how he had himself mistrusted, not Malcolm's word indeed, but his heart. He turned, and clasping his hands in sudden self-reproach,

"My lord, I saired ye ill mysel' ance," he cried; "for I misdoobted 'at ye wasna the same to me efter ye cam to yer ain. I beg yer pardon, my lord, here i' the face o' my freen's. It was ill-temper an' pride i' me, jist the same as it's noo in Girnel there; an' ye maun forgi'e him, as ye forga'e me, my lord, as sune 's ye can."

"I'll du that, my Peter, the verra moment he wants to be forgi'en," said Malcolm.

But Girnel turned with a grunt, and moved away towards the cliff.

"This 'll never du," said Peter. "A man 'at 's honest i' the main may play the verra dog afore he gets the deevil oot o' 'im ance he 's in like that. Gang efter 'im, laads, an' kep *(intercept)* 'im an' keep 'im. We'll ha'e to cast a k-not or twa aboot 'im, an' lay 'im i' the boddom o' the boat."

The six had already started after him like one man. But Malcolm cried,

"Let him go: he has done me no wrong yet, and I don't believe will do me any. But for no risk must we prevent wrong with wrong."

So Girnel was allowed to depart—scarcely in peace, for he was already ashamed of himself. With the understanding that they were to be ready to his call, and that they should hear from him in the course of the day, Malcolm left them, and rowed back to the Psyche. There he took his basket of fish on his arm, which he went and distributed according to his purpose, ending with Mrs. Courthope at the House. Then he fed and dressed Kelpie, saddled her and galloped to Duff Harbour, where he found Mr. Soutar at breakfast, and arranged with him to be at Lossie House at two o'clock. On his

way back he called on Mr. Morrison, and requested his presence at the same hour. Skirting the back of the House, and riding as straight as he could, he then made for Scaurnose, and appointed his friends to be near the House at noon, so placed as not to attract observation and yet be within hearing of his whistle from door or window in the front. Returning to the House, he put up Kelpie, rubbed her down and fed her; then, as there was yet some time to spare, paid a visit to the factor. He found his lady, for all his present of fish in the earlier morning, anything but friendly. She did all she could to humble him; insisted on paying him for the fish; and ordered him, because they smelt of the stable, to take off his boots before he went upstairs—to his master's room, as she phrased it. But Mr. Crathie was cordial, and, to Malcolm's great satisfaction, much recovered. He had better than pleasant talk with him.

CHAPTER XV.

LIZZY'S BABY.

WHILE they were out in the fishing-boat together, Clementina had, with less difficulty than she had anticipated, persuaded Lizzy to tell Lady Lossie her secret. It was in the hope of an interview with her false lover that the poor girl had consented so easily.

A great longing had risen within her to have the father of her child acknowledge him—only to her, taking him once in his arms. That was all. She had no hope, thought indeed she had no desire for herself. But a kind word to him would be welcome as light. The love that covers sins had covered the multitude of his, and although hopelessness had put desire to sleep, she would gladly have given her life for a loving smile from him. But mingled with this

longing to see him once with his child in his arms, a certain loyalty to the house of Lossie also influenced her to listen to the solicitation of Lady Clementina, and tell the marchioness the truth. She cherished no resentment against Liftore, but not therefore was she willing to allow a poor young thing like Lady Lossie, whom they all liked, to be sacrificed to such a man, who would doubtless at length behave badly enough to her also.

With trembling hands, and heart now beating wildly, now failing for fear, she dressed her baby and herself as well as she could, and, about one o'clock, went to the House.

Now nothing would have better pleased Lady Clementina than that Liftore and Lizzy should meet in Florimel's presence, but she recoiled altogether from the small stratagems, not to mention the lies, necessary to the effecting of such a confrontation. So she had to content herself with bringing the two girls together, and, when Lizzy was a little rested, and had had a glass of wine, went to look for Florimel.

She found her in a little room adjoining the library, which, on her first coming to Lossie, she

had chosen for her waking nest. Liftore had, if not quite the freedom of the spot, yet privileges there; but at that moment Florimel was alone in it. Clementina informed her that a fisher-girl, with a sad story which she wanted to tell her, had come to the house; and Florimel, who was not only kind-hearted, but relished the position she imagined herself to occupy as lady of the place, at once assented to her proposal to bring the young woman to her there.

Now Florimel and the earl had had a small quarrel the night before, after Clementina left the dinner-table, and for the pleasure of keeping it up Florimel had not appeared at breakfast, and had declined to ride with his lordship, who had therefore been all the morning on the watch for an opportunity of reconciling himself. It so happened that from the end of one of the long narrow passages in which the house abounded, he caught a glimpse of Clementina's dress vanishing through the library door, and took the lady for Florimel on her way to her boudoir.

When Clementina entered with Lizzy carrying her child, Florimel instantly suspected the

truth, both as to who she was and as to the design of her appearance. Her face flushed, for her heart filled with anger, chiefly indeed against Malcolm, but against the two women as well, who, she did not doubt, had lent themselves to his designs, whatever they might be. She rose, drew herself up, and stood prepared to act for both Liftore and herself.

Scarcely however had the poor girl, trembling at the evident displeasure the sight of her caused in Florimel, opened her mouth to answer her haughty inquiry as to her business, when Lord Liftore, daring an entrance without warning, opened the door behind her, and, almost as he opened it, began his apology. At the sound of his voice Lizzy turned with a cry, and her small remaining modicum of self-possession vanished at sight of him round whose phantom in her bosom whirred the leaves of her withered life on the stinging blasts of her shame and sorrow. As much from inability to stand as in supplication for the coveted favour, she dropped on her knees before him, incapable of uttering a word, but holding up her child imploringly. Taken altogether by surprise, and

not knowing what to say or do, the earl stood and stared for a moment, then, moved by a dull spirit of subterfuge, fell back on the pretence of knowing nothing about her.

"Well, young woman," he said, affecting cheerfulness, "what do you want with me? I didn't advertise for a baby. Pretty child, though!"

Lizzy turned white as death, and her whole body seemed to give a heave of agony. Clementina had just taken the child from her arms when she sunk motionless at his feet. Florimel went to the bell. But Clementina prevented her from ringing.

"I will take her away," she said. "Do not expose her to your servants. Lady Lossie, my Lord Liftore is the father of this child: and if you can marry him after the way you have seen him use its mother, you are not too good for him, and I will trouble myself no more about you."

"I know the author of this calumny!" cried Florimel, panting and flushed. "You have been listening to the inventions of an ungrateful dependent! You slander my guest."

"Is it a calumny, my lord? Do I slander you?" said Lady Clementina, turning sharply upon the earl.

His lordship made her a cool obeisance.

Clementina ran into the library, laid the child in a big chair, and returned for the mother. She was already coming a little to herself, and feeling about blindly for her baby, while Florimel and Liftore were looking out of the window, with their backs towards her. Clementina raised and led her from the room. But in the doorway she turned and said—

"Good-bye, Lady Lossie. I thank you for your hospitality, but I can of course be your guest no longer."

"Of course not. There is no occasion for prolonged leave-taking," returned Florimel, with the air of a woman of forty.

"Florimel, you will curse the day you marry that man!" cried Clementina, and closed the door.

She hurried Lizzy to the library, put the baby in her arms, and clasped them both in her own. A gush of tears lightened the oppressed heart of the mother.

"Lat me oot o' the hoose, for God's sake!" she cried; and Clementina, almost as anxious to leave it as she, helped her down to the hall. When she saw the open door, she rushed out of it as if escaping from the pit.

Now Malcolm, as he came from the factor's, had seen her go in with her baby in her arms, and suspected the hand of Clementina. Wondering and anxious, but not very hopeful as to what might come of it, he waited close by; and when now he saw Lizzy dart from the house in wild perturbation, he ran from the cover of the surrounding trees into the open drive to meet her.

"Ma'colm!" groaned the poor girl, holding out her baby, "he winna own till 't. He winna alloo 'at he kens oucht aboot me or the bairn aither!"

Malcolm had taken the child from her, and was clasping him to his bosom.

"He's the warst rascal, Lizzy," he said, "'at ever God made an' the deevil blaudit."

"Na, na," cried Lizzy; "the likes o' him whiles kills the wuman, but he wadna du that. Na, he's nae the warst; there's a heap waur nor him."

"Did ye see my mistress?" asked Malcolm.

"Ow ay; but she luikit sae angry at me, I cudna speyk. Him an' her 's ower thrang for her to believe onything again' 'im. An' what ever the bairn 's to du wantin' a father!"

"Lizzy," said Malcolm, clasping the child again to his bosom. "I's' be a father to yer bairn—that is, as weel's ane 'at's no yer man can be."

And he kissed the child tenderly.

The same moment an undefined impulse—the drawing of eyes probably—made him lift his towards the house: half leaning from the open window of the boudoir above him, stood Florimel and Liftore; and just as he looked up, Liftore was turning to Florimel with a smile that seemed to say—"There! I told you so! He is the father himself."

Malcolm replaced the infant in his mother's arms, and strode towards the house. Imagining he went to avenge her wrongs, Lizzy ran after him.

"Ma'colm! Ma'colm!" she cried; "—for my sake!—He's the father o' my bairn!"

Malcolm turned.

"Lizzy," he said solemnly, "I winna lay han' upon 'im."

Lizzy pressed her child closer with a throb of relief.

"Come in yersel' an' see," he added.

"I daurna! I daurna!" she said. But she lingered about the door.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DISCLOSURE.

WHEN the earl saw Malcolm coming, although he was no coward, and had reason to trust his skill, yet knowing himself both in the wrong and vastly inferior in strength to his enemy, it may be pardoned him that for the next few seconds his heart doubled its beats. But of all things he must not show fear before Florimel!

"What can the fellow be after now?" he said. "I must go down to him."

"No, no; don't go near him—he may be violent," objected Florimel, and laid her hand on his arm with a beseeching look in her face. "He is a dangerous man."

Liftore laughed.

"Stop here till I return," he said, and left the room.

But Florimel followed, fearful of what might happen, and enraged with her brother.

Malcolm's brief detention by Lizzy gave Liftore a little advantage, for just as Malcolm approached the top of the great staircase, Liftore gained it. Hastening to secure the command of the position, and resolved to shun all parley, he stood ready to strike. Malcolm, however, caught sight of him and his attitude in time, and, fearful of breaking his word to Lizzy, pulled himself up abruptly a few steps from the top—just as Florimel appeared.

"MacPhail," she said, sweeping to the stair like an indignant goddess, "I discharge you from my service. Leave the house instantly."

Malcolm turned, flew down, and ran to the servants' stair, half the length of the house away. As he crossed the servants' hall he saw Rose. She was the only one in the house except Clementina to whom he could look for help.

"Come after me, Rose," he said, without stopping.

She followed instantly, as fast as she could run, and saw him enter the drawing-room.

Florimel and Liftore were there. The earl had Florimel's hand in his.

"For God's sake, my lady!" cried Malcolm, "hear me one word before you promise that man anything."

His lordship started back from Florimel, and turned upon Malcolm in a fury. But he had not now the advantage of the stair, and hesitated. Florimel's eyes dilated with wrath.

"I tell you for the last time, my lady," said Malcolm, "if you marry that man, you will marry a liar and a scoundrel."

Liftore laughed, and his imitation of scorn was wonderfully successful, for he felt sure of Florimel, now that she had thus taken his part.

"Shall I ring for the servants, Lady Lossie, to put the fellow out?" he said. "The man is as mad as a March hare."

Meantime Lady Clementina, her maid having gone to send her man to get horses for her at once, was alone in her room, which was close to the drawing-room: hearing Malcolm's voice, she ran to the door, and saw Rose in a listening attitude at that of the drawing-room.

"What are you doing there?" she said.

"Mr. MacPhail told me to follow him, my lady, and I am waiting here till he wants me."

Clementina went into the drawing-room, and was present during all that now follows. Lizzy also, hearing loud voices and still afraid of mischief, had come peering up the stair, and now approached the other door, behind Florimel and the earl.

"So!" cried Florimel, "this is the way you keep your promise to my father!"

"It is, my lady. To associate the name of Liftore with his would be to blot the scutcheon of Lossie. He is not fit to walk the street with men: his touch is to you an utter degradation. My lady, in the name of your father, I beg a word with you in private."

"You insult me."

"I beg of you, my lady—for your own dear sake."

"Once more I order you to leave my house, and never set foot in it again."

"You hear her ladyship?" cried Liftore. "Get out."

He approached threateningly.

"Stand back," said Malcolm. "If it were

not that I promised the poor girl carrying your baby out there, I should soon——"

It was unwisely said: the earl came on the bolder. For all Malcolm could do to parry, evade, or stop his blows, he had soon taken several pretty severe ones. Then came the voice of Lizzy in an agony from the door—

"Haud aff o' yersel', Ma'colm. I canna bide it. I gi'e ye back yer word."

"We'll manage yet, Lizzy," answered Malcolm, and kept warily retreating towards a window. Suddenly he dashed his elbow through a pane, and gave a loud shrill whistle, the same instant receiving a blow over the eye which the blood followed. Lizzy made a rush forward, but the terror that the father would strike the child he had disowned, seized her, and she stood trembling. Already, however, Clementina and Rose had darted between, and, full of rage as he was, Liftore was compelled to restrain himself.

"Oh!" he said, "if ladies want a share in the row, I must yield my place," and drew back.

The few men servants now came hurrying all together into the room.

"Take that rascal there, and put him under the pump," said Liftore. "He is mad."

"My fellow servants know better than touch me," said Malcolm.

The men looked to their mistress.

"Do as my lord tells you," she said, "—and instantly."

"Men," said Malcolm, "I have spared that foolish lord there for the sake of this fisher-girl and his child, but don't one of *you* touch me."

Stoat was a brave enough man, and not a little jealous of Malcolm, but he dared not obey his mistress.

And now came the tramp of many feet along the landing from the stair-head, and the six fishermen entered, two and two. Florimel started forward.

"My brave fishermen!" she cried. "Take that bad man MacPhail, and put him out of my grounds."

"I canna du't, my leddy," answered their leader.

"Take Lord Liftore," said Malcolm, "and hold him, while I make him acquainted with a

fact or two which he may judge of consequence to him."

The men walked straight up to the earl. He struck right and left, but was overpowered in a moment, and held fast.

"Stan' still," said Peter, "or I ha'e a han'-fu' o' twine i' my pooch 'at I'll jist cast a k-not aboot yer airms wi' in a jiffey."

His lordship stood still, muttering curses.

Then Malcolm stepped into the middle of the room, approaching his sister.

"I tell you to leave the house," Florimel shrieked, beside herself with fury, yet pale as marble with a growing terror for which she could ill have accounted.

"Florimel!" said Malcolm solemnly, calling his sister by her name for the first time.

"You insolent wretch!" she cried, panting. "What right have you, if you *be*, as you say, my base-born brother, to call me by my name."

"Florimel!" repeated Malcolm, and the voice was like the voice of her father, "I have done what I could to serve you."

"And I want no more such service!" she returned, beginning to tremble.

"But you have driven me almost to extremities," he went on, heedless of her interruption. "Beware of doing so quite."

"Will nobody take pity on me?" said Florimel, and looked round imploringly. Then, finding herself ready to burst into tears, she gathered all her pride, and stepping up to Malcolm, looked him in the face, and said,

"Pray, sir! is this house yours or mine?"

"Mine," answered Malcolm. "I am the Marquis of Lossie, and while I am your elder brother and the head of the family, you shall never with my consent marry that base man—a man it would blast me to the soul to call brother."

Liftore uttered a fierce imprecation.

"If you dare give breath to another such word in my sister's presence, I will have you gagged," said Malcolm. "If my sister marries him," he continued, turning again to Florimel, "not one shilling shall she take with her beyond what she may happen to have in her purse at the moment. She is in my power, and I will use it to the utmost to protect her from that man."

"Proof!" cried Liftore sullenly. But Florimel gazed with pale dilated eyes in the face of the speaker. She knew his words were true. Her soul assured her of it.

"To my sister," answered Malcolm, "I will give all the proof she may please to require; to Lord Liftore I will not even repeat my assertion. To him I will give no shadow of proof. I will but cast him out of my house. Stoat, order horses for Lady Bellair."

"Gien ye please, sir, my lord," replied Stoat, "the Lossie Airms horses is ordered a'ready for Lady Clementina."

"Will my Lady Clementina oblige me by yielding her horses to Lady Bellair?" said Malcolm, turning to her.

"Certainly, my lord," answered Clementina.

"You, I trust, my lady," said Malcolm, "will stay a little longer with my sister."

Lady Bellair came up.

"My lord," she said, "is this the marquis or the fisherman's way of treating a lady?"

"Neither. But do not drive me to give the rein to my tongue. Let it be enough to say that my house shall never be what your presence would make it."

He turned to the fishermen.

"Three of you take that lord to the town-gate, and leave him on the other side of it. His servant shall follow as soon as the horses come."

"I will go with you," said Florimel, crossing to Lady Bellair.

Malcolm took her by the arm. For one moment she struggled, but finding no one dared interfere, submitted, and was led from the room like a naughty child.

"Keep my lord there till I return," he said as he went.

He led her into the room which had been her mother's boudoir, and when he had shut the door,

"Florimel," he said, "I have striven to serve you the best way I knew. Your father, when he confessed me his heir, begged me to be good to you, and I promised him. Would I have given all these months of my life to the poor labour of a groom, allowed my people to be wronged and oppressed, my grandfather to be a wanderer, and my best friend to sit with his lips of wisdom sealed, but for your sake? I can

hardly say it was for my father's sake, for I should have done the same had he never said a word about you. Florimel, I loved my sister, and longed for her goodness. But she has foiled all my endeavours. She has not loved or followed the truth. She has been proud and disdainful, and careless of right. Yourself young and pure, and naturally recoiling from evil, you have yet cast from you the devotion of a noble, gifted, large-hearted, and great-souled man, for the miserable preference of the smallest, meanest, vilest of men. Nor that only! for with him you have sided against the woman he most bitterly wrongs: and therein you wrong the nature and the God of women. Once more, I pray you to give up this man; to let your true self speak and send him away."

"Sir, I go with my Lady Bellair, driven from my father's house by one who calls himself my brother. My lawyer shall make inquiries."

She would have left the room, but he intercepted her.

"Florimel," he said, "you are casting the pearl of your womanhood before a swine. He

will trample it under his feet and turn again and rend you. He will treat you worse still than poor Lizzy, whom he troubles no more with his presence."

He had again taken her arm in his great grasp.

"Let me go. You are brutal. I shall scream."

"You shall not go until you have heard all the truth."

"What! more truth still? Your truth is anything but pleasant."

"It is more unpleasant yet than you surmise. Florimel, you have driven me to it. I would have prepared you a shield against the shock which must come, but you compel me to wound you to the quick. I would have had you receive the bitter truth from lips you loved, but you drove those lips of honour from you, and now there are left to utter it only the lips you hate, yet the truth you shall receive: it may help to save you from weakness, arrogance, and falsehood.—Sister, your mother was never Lady Lossie."

"You lie. I know you lie. Because you

wrong me, you would brand me with dishonour, to take from me as well the sympathy of the world. But I defy you."

"Alas! there is no help, sister. Your mother indeed passed as Lady Lossie, but my mother, the true Lady Lossie, was alive all the time, and in truth, died only last year. For twenty years my mother suffered for yours in the eye of the law. You are no better than the little child his father denied in your presence. Give that man his dismissal, or he will give you yours. Never doubt it. Refuse again, and I go from this room to publish in the next the fact that you are neither Lady Lossie nor Lady Florimel Colonsay. You have no right to any name but your mother's. You are Miss Gordon."

She gave a great gasp at the word, but bravely fought the horror that was taking possession of her. She stood with one hand on the back of a chair, her face white, her eyes starting, her mouth a little open and rigid—her whole appearance, except for the breath that came short and quick, that of one who had died in sore pain.

"All that is now left you," concluded Malcolm, "is the choice between sending Liftore away, and being abandoned by him. That choice you must now make."

The poor girl tried to speak, but could not. Her fire was burning out, her forced strength fast failing her.

"Florimel," said Malcolm, and knelt on one knee and took her hand. It gave a flutter as if it would fly like a bird; but the net of his love held it, and it lay passive and cold. "Florimel, I will be your true brother. I *am* your brother, your very own brother, to live for you, love you, fight for you, watch and ward you, till a true man takes you for his wife." Her hand quivered like a leaf. "Sister, when you and I appear before our father, I shall hold up my face before him: will you?"

"Send him away," she breathed rather than said, and sank on the floor. He lifted her, laid her on a couch, and returned to the drawing-room.

"My Lady Clementina," he said, "will you oblige me by going to my sister in the room at the top of the stair?"

"I will, my lord," she answered, and went.

Malcolm walked up to Liftore.

"My lord," he said, "my sister takes her leave of you."

"I must have my dismissal from her own lips."

"You shall have it from the hands of my fishermen. Take him away."

"You shall hear from me, my lord marquis, if such you be," said Liftore.

"Let it be of your repentance, then, my lord," said Malcolm. "That I shall be glad to hear of."

As he turned from him, he saw Caley gliding through the little group of servants towards the door. He walked after her, laid his hand on her shoulder, and whispered a word in her ear. She grew gray rather than white, and stood still.

Turning again to go to Florimel, he saw the fishermen stopped with their charge in the doorway by Mr. Morrison and Mr. Soutar, entering together.

"My lord! my lord!" said the lawyer, coming

hastily up to him, "there can surely be no occasion for such—such—measures!"

Catching sight of Malcolm's wounded forehead, however, he supplemented the remark with a low exclamation of astonishment and dismay—the tone saying almost as clearly as words, "How ill and foolishly everything is managed without a lawyer!" Malcolm only smiled, and went up to the magistrate, whom he led into the middle of the room, saying,

"Mr. Morrison, everyone here knows you: tell them who I am."

"The Marquis of Lossie, my lord," answered Mr. Morrison; "and from my heart I congratulate your people that at length you assume the rights and honours of your position."

A murmur of pleasure arose in response. Ere it ceased, Malcolm started and sprung to the door. There stood Lenorme! He seized him by the arm, and, without a word of explanation, hurried him to the room where his sister was. He called Clementina, drew her from the room, half pushed Lenorme in, and closed the door.

"Will you meet me on the sand-hill at sunset, my lady?" he said.

She smiled assent. He gave her the key of the tunnel, hinted that she might leave the two to themselves for awhile, and returned to his friends in the drawing-room.

Having begged them to excuse him for a little while, and desired Mrs. Courthope to serve luncheon for them, he ran to his grandfather, dreading lest any other tongue than his own should yield him the opened secret. He was but just in time, for already the town was in a tumult, and the spreading ripples of the news were fast approaching Duncan's ears.

Malcolm found him, expectant and restless. When he disclosed himself, he manifested little astonishment, only took him in his arms and pressed him to his bosom, saying, "Ta Lort pe praised, my son! and she wouldn't pe at aal surprised." Then he broke out in a fervent ejaculation of Gaelic, during which he turned instinctively to his pipes, for through them lay the final and only sure escape for the prisoned waters of the overcharged reservoir of his feelings. While he played, Malcolm slipped out, and hurried to Miss Horn.

One word to her was enough. The stern old woman burst into tears, crying,

"Oh, my Grisel! my Grisel! Luik doon frae yer bonny hoose amo' the stars, an' see the braw laad left ahint ye, an' praise the lord 'at ye ha'e sic a son o' yer boady to come hame to ye whan a' 's ower."

She sobbed and wept for a while without restraint. Then suddenly she rose, dabbed her eyes indignantly, and cried,

"Hoot! I'm an auld fule. A body wad think I hed feelin's efter a'!"

Malcolm laughed, and she could not help joining him.

"Ye maun come the morn an' chise yer ain room i' the Hoose," he said.

"What mean ye by that, laddie?"

"'At ye'll ha'e to come an' bide wi' me noo."

"'Deed an' I s' du naething o' the kin', Ma'colm! H'ard ever onybody sic nonsense! What wad I du wi' Jean? An' I cudna thole men-fowk to wait upo' me. I wad be clean affrontit."

"Weel, weel! we'll see," said Malcolm.

On his way back to the House, he knocked at Mrs. Catanach's door, and said a few words to her which had a remarkable effect on the ex-

pression of her plump countenance and deep-set black eyes.

When he reached home, he ran up the main staircase, knocked at the first door, opened it, and peeped in. There sat Lenorme on the couch, with Florimel on his knees, nestling her head against his shoulder, like a child that had been very naughty but was fully forgiven. Her face was blotted with her tears, and her hair was everywhere; but there was a light of dawning goodness all about her, such as had never shone in her atmosphere before. By what stormy-sweet process the fountain of this light had been unsealed, no one ever knew but themselves.

She did not move when Malcolm entered—more than just to bring the palms of her hands together, and look up in his face.

"Have you told him *all*, Florimel?" he asked.

"Yes, Malcolm," she answered. "Tell him again yourself."

"No, Florimel. Once is enough."

"I told him *all*," she said with a gasp; then gave a wild little cry, and, with subdued exultation, added, "and he *loves* me yet! He

has taken the girl without a name to his heart!"

"No wonder," said Malcolm, "when she brought it with her."

"Yes," said Lenorme, "I but took the diamond casket that held my bliss, and now I could dare the angel Gabriel to match happinesses with me."

Poor Florimel, for all her worldly ways, was but a child. Bad associates had filled her with worldly maxims and words and thoughts and judgments. She had never loved Liftore, she had only taken delight in his flatteries. And now had come the shock of a terrible disclosure, whose significance she read in remembered looks and tones and behaviours of the world. Her insolence to Malcolm when she supposed his the nameless fate, had recoiled in lurid interpretation of her own. She was a pariah—without root, without descent, without fathers to whom to be gathered. She was nobody. From the courted and flattered and high-seated and powerful, she was a nobody! Then suddenly to this poor houseless, wind-beaten, rain-wet nobody, a house—no, a home she had once looked into with longing, had opened, and re-

ceived her to its heart, that it might be fulfilled which was written of old, "A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." Knowing herself a nobody, she now first began to be a somebody. She had been dreaming pleasant but bad dreams: she woke, and here was a lovely, unspeakably blessed and good reality, which had been waiting for her all the time on the threshold of her sleep! She was baptized into it with the tears of sorrow and shame. She had been a fool, but now she knew it, and was going to be wise.

"Will you come to your brother, Florimel?" said Malcolm tenderly, holding out his arms.

Lenorme raised her. She went softly to him, and laid herself on his bosom.

"Forgive me, brother," she said, and held up her face.

He kissed her forehead and lips, took her in his arms, and laid her again on Lenorme's knees.

"I give her to *you*," he said, "for you are good."

With that he left them, and sought Mr. Mor-

rison and Mr. Soutar, who were waiting him over a glass of wine after their lunch. An hour of business followed, in which, amongst other matters, they talked about the needful arrangements for a dinner to his people, fishers and farmers and all.

After the gentlemen took their leave, nobody saw him for hours. Till sunset approached he remained alone, shut up in the Wizard's Chamber, the room in which he was born. Part of the time he occupied in writing to Mr. Graham.

As the sun's orbed furnace fell behind the tumbling waters, Malcolm turned his face inland from the wet strip of shining shore on which he had been pacing, and ascended the sandhill. From the other side Clementina, but a moment later, ascended also. On the top they met, in the red light of the sunset. They clasped each the other's hand, and stood for a moment in silence.

"Ah, my lord!" said the lady, "how shall I thank you that you kept your secret from me! But my heart is sore to lose my fisherman."

"My lady," returned Malcolm, "you have not lost your fisherman; you have only found your groom."

And the sun went down, and the twilight came, and the night followed, and the world of sea and land and wind and vapour was around them, and the universe of stars and spaces over and under them, and eternity within them, and the heart of each for a chamber to the other, and God filling all—nay, nay—God's heart containing, infolding, cherishing all—saving all, from height to height of intensest being, by the bliss of that love whose absolute devotion could utter itself only in death.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ASSEMBLY.

THAT same evening, Duncan, in full dress, claymore and dirk at his sides, and carrying the great Lossie pipes, marched first through the streets of the upper, then through the closes of the lower town, followed by the bellman who had been appointed crier upon his disappearance. At the proper stations, Duncan blew a rousing pibroch, after which the bellman, who, for the dignity of his calling, insisted on a prelude of three strokes of his clapper, proclaimed aloud that Malcolm, Marquis of Lossie, desired the presence of each and every of his tenants in the royal burgh of Portlossie, Newton and Seaton, in the town-hall of the same, at seven of the clock upon the evening next following. The proclamation ended, the

piper sounded one note three times, and they passed to the next station. When they had gone through the Seaton, they entered a carriage waiting for them at the sea-gate, and were driven to Scaurnose, and thence again to the several other villages on the coast belonging to the marquis, making at each in like manner the same announcement.

Portlossie was in a ferment of wonder, satisfaction, and pleasure. There were few in it who were not glad at the accession of Malcolm, and with every one of those few the cause lay in himself. In the shops, among the nets, in the curing-sheds, in the houses and cottages, nothing else was talked about; and stories and reminiscences innumerable were brought out, chiefly to prove that Malcolm had always appeared likely to turn out somebody, the narrator not seldom modestly hinting at a glimmering foresight on his own part of what had now been at length revealed to the world. His friends were jubilant as revellers. For Meg Partan, she ran from house to house like a maniac, laughing and crying. It was as if the whole Seaton had suddenly been translated. The men

came crowding about Duncan, congratulating him and asking him a hundred questions. But the old man maintained a reticence whose dignity was strangely mingled of pomp and grace; sat calm and stately as feeling the glow of reflected honour; would not, by word, gesture, tone, or exclamation, confess to any surprise; behaved as if he had known it all the time; made no pretence however of having known it, merely treated the fact as not a whit more than might have been looked for by one who had known Malcolm as he had known him.

Davy, in his yacht uniform, was the next morning appointed the marquis's personal attendant, and a running time he had of it for a fortnight.

Almost the first thing that fell to him in his office was to show into the room on the ground floor where his master sat—the same in which for ages the lords of Lossie had been wont to transact what little business any of them ever attended to—a pale, feeble man, bowed by the weight of a huge brass-clasped volume under each arm. His lordship rose and met him with outstretched hand.

"I am glad indeed to see you, Mr. Crathie," he said, "but I fear you are out too soon."

"I am quite well since yesterday, my lord," returned the factor, his face shining with pleasure. "Your lordship's accession has made a young man of me again. Here I am to render account of my stewardship."

"I want none, Mr. Crathie—nothing, that is, beyond a summary statement of how things stand with me."

"I should like to satisfy your lordship that I have dealt honestly"—here the factor paused for a moment, then with an effort added—"by *you*, my lord."

"One word," said Malcolm "—the last of the sort, I believe, that will ever pass between us. Thank God! we had made it up before yesterday.—If you have ever been hard upon any of my tenants, not to say unfair, you have wronged me infinitely more than if you had taken from me. God be with me as I prefer ruin to wrong. Remember, besides, that my tenants are my charge and care. For you, my representative, therefore, to do one of them an injury is to do me a double injury—to wrong my tenant, and to wrong him in my name."

"Ah, my lord! you don't know how they would take advantage of you, if there were nobody to look after your interests."

"Then do look after them, sir. It would be bad for them to succeed, as well as crippling to me. Only be sure, with the thought of the righteous God to elevate your sense of justice, that you are in the right. If doubtful, then give in.—And now, if any man thinks he has cause of complaint, I leave it to you, with the help of the new light that has been given you, to reconsider the matter, and, where needful, to make reparation. You must be the friend of my tenant as much as of his landlord. I have no interests inimical to those of my tenants. If any man comes to me with complaint, I will send him to restate his case to you, with the understanding that, if you will not listen to him, he is to come to me again, when I shall hear both sides and judge between. If after six months you should desire me to go over the books with you, I will do so. As to your loyalty to my family and its affairs, of that I never had a shadow of suspicion."

As he ended, Malcolm held out his hand.

The factor's trembled in his strong grasp.

"Mistress Crathie is sorely vexed, my lord," he said, rising to take his leave, "at things both said and done in the dark."

Malcolm laughed.

"Give Mrs. Crathie my compliments," he said, "and tell her a man is more than a marquis. If she will after this treat every honest fisherman as if he might possibly turn out a lord, she and I shall be more than quits."

The next morning he carried her again a few mackerel he had just caught, and she never forgot the lesson given her. That morning, I may mention, he did not go fishing alone, but had a lady with him in the dinghy; and indeed they were together, in one place and another, the most of the day—at one time flying along the fields, she on the bay mare, and he on Kelpie.

When the evening came, the town-hall was crammed—men standing on all the window-sills; and so many could not get in that Malcolm proposed they should occupy the square in front. A fisherman in garb and gesture, not the less a gentleman and a marquis, he stood on the steps

of the town-hall, and spoke to his people. They received him with wild enthusiasm.

"The open air is better for everything," he began. "Fishers, I have called you first, because you are my own people. I am, and shall be a fisherman, after such fashion, I trust, as will content my old comrades. How things have come about, I shall not now tell you. Come all of you and dine with me, and you shall hear enough to satisfy at least lawful curiosity. At present my care is that you should understand the terms upon which it is possible for us to live together as friends. I make no allusion to personal friendships. A true friend is for ever a friend. And I venture to say my old friends know best both what I am and what I shall be. As to them I have no shadow of anxiety. But I would gladly be a friend to all, and will do my endeavour to that end.

"You of Portlossie shall have your harbour cleared without delay."

In justice to the fishers I here interrupt my report to state that the very next day they set about clearing the harbour themselves. It was their business—in part at least, they said, and

they were ashamed of having left it so long. This did much towards starting well for a new order of things.

"You of Scaurnose shall hear the blasting necessary for your harbour commence within a fortnight; and every house shall ere long have a small piece of land at a reasonable rate allotted it. But I feel bound to mention that there are some among you upon whom, until I see that they carry themselves differently, I must keep an eye. That they have shown themselves unfriendly to myself, in my attempts to persuade them to what they knew to be right, I shall endeavour to forget, but I give them warning that whoever shall hereafter disturb the peace or interfere with the liberty of my people, shall assuredly be cast out of my borders, and that as soon as the law will permit.

"I shall take measures that all complaints shall be heard, and all save foolish ones heeded; for, as much as in me lies, I will to execute justice and judgment and righteousness in the land. Whoever oppresses or wrongs his neighbour shall have to do with me. And to aid me in doing justice, I pray the help of

every honest man. I have not been so long among you without having in some measure distinguished between the men who have heart and brain, and the men who have merely a sense of their own importance—which latter class, unhappily, always takes itself for the former. I will deal with every man as I find him. I am set to rule, and rule I will. He who loves righteousness, will help me to rule; he who loves it not, shall be ruled, or depart."

The address had been every now and then interrupted by a hearty cheer; at this point the cheering was greatly prolonged; after it there was no more. For thus he went on:

"And now I am about to give you proof that I mean what I say, and that evil shall not come to the light without being noted and dealt with.

"There are in this company two women—my eyes are at this moment upon them where they stand together. One of them is already well known to you all by sight: now you shall know, not what she looks, but what she is. Her name, or at least that by which she goes among you, is Barbara Catanach. The other is an

Englishwoman of whom you know nothing. Her name is Caley."

All eyes were turned upon the two. Even Mrs. Catanach was cowed by the consciousness of the universal stare, and a kind of numb thrill went through her from head to foot.

"Well assured that if I brought a criminal action against them, it would hang them both, I trust you will not imagine it revenge that moves me thus to expose them. In refraining from prosecuting them, I bind myself of necessity to see that they work no more evil. In giving them time for repentance, I take the consequences upon myself. I am bound to take care that they do not employ the respite in doing mischief to their neighbours. Without precaution I could not be justified in sparing them. Therefore those women shall not go forth to pass for harmless members of society, and see the life and honour of others lie bare to their secret attack. They shall live *here*, in this town, thoroughly known, and absolutely distrusted. And that they may thus be known and distrusted, I publicly declare that I hold proof against these women of having conspired to kill me.

From the effects of the poison they succeeded in giving me, I fear I shall never altogether recover. I can prove also, to the extreme of circumstantial evidence, that there is the blood of one child at least upon the hands of each; and that there are mischiefs innumerable upon their lying tongues, it were an easy task to convince you. If I wrong them, let them accuse me; and, whether they lose or gain their suit, I promise before you for witnesses, I will pay all; only thereby they will compel me to bring my actions for murder and conspiracy. Let them choose.

"Hear what I have determined concerning them. The woman Catanach shall take to her cottage the woman Caley. That cottage they shall have rent free: who could receive money from such hands? I will appoint them also a sufficiency for life and maintenance, bare indeed, for I would not have them comfortable. But they shall be free to work if they can find any to employ them. If, however, either shall go beyond the bounds I set, she shall be followed the moment she is missed, and that with a warrant for her apprehension. And I beg all honest

people to keep an eye upon them. According as they live shall their life be. If they come to repentance, they will bless the day I resolved upon such severe measures on their behalf. Let them go to their place."

I will not try to describe the devilish look, mingled of contempt and hate, that possessed the countenance of the midwife, as, with head erect, and eyes looking straight before her, she obeyed the command. Caley, white as death, trembled and tottered, nor dared once look up as she followed her companion to their appointed hell. Whether they made it pleasant for each other my reader may debate with himself. Before many months had gone by, stared at and shunned by all, even by Miss Horn's Jean, driven back upon her own memories, and the pictures that rose out of them, and deprived of every chance of indulging her dominant passion for mischievous influence, the midwife's face told such a different tale, that the schoolmaster began to cherish a feeble hope that within a few years Mrs. Catanach might get so far as to begin to suspect that she was a sinner—that she had actually done things she ought not to have

done. One of those things that same night Malcolm heard from the lips of Duncan, a tale of horror and dismay. Not until then did he know, after all he knew concerning her, what the woman was capable of.

At his own entreaty, Duncan was formally recognized as piper to the Marquis of Lossie. His ambition reached no higher. Malcolm himself saw to his perfect equipment, heedful specially that his kilt and plaid should be of Duncan's own tartan of red and blue and green. His dirk and broadsword he had new sheathed, with silver mountings. A great silver brooch with a big cairngorm in the centre, took the place of the brass one, which henceforth was laid up among the precious things in the little armoury, and the badge of his clan in gold, with rubies and amethysts for the bells of the heather, glowed on his bonnet. And Malcolm's guests, as long as Duncan continued able to fill the bag, had to endure as best they might, between each course at every dinner without fail, two or three minutes of uproar and outcry from the treble throat of the powerful Lossie pipes. By his own desire, the piper had a chair and

small table set for him behind and to the right of his chief, as he called him; there he ate with the family and guests, waited upon by Davy, part of whose business it was to hand him the pipes at the proper moment, whereupon he rose to his feet, for even he with all his experience and habitude was unable in a sitting posture to keep that stand of pipes full of wind, and raised such a storm of sound as made the windows tremble. A lady guest would now and then venture to hint that the custom was rather a trying one for English ears; but Clementina would never listen to a breath against Duncan's music. Her respect and affection for the old man were unbounded.

Malcolm was one of the few who understand the shelter of light, the protection to be gained against lying tongues by the discarding of needless reticence, and the open presentation of the truth. Many men who would not tell a lie, yet seem to have faith in concealment: they would rather not reveal the truth; darkness seems to offer them the cover of a friendly wing. But there is no veil like light—no adamantine armour against hurt like the truth.

To Malcolm it was one of the promises of the kingdom that there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed. He was anxious, therefore, to tell his people, at the coming dinner, the main points of his story, and certain that such openness would also help to lay the foundation of confidence between him and his people. The one difficulty in the way was the position of Florimel. But that could not fail to appear in any case, and he was satisfied that even for her sake it was far better to speak openly; for then the common heart would take her in and cover her. He consulted, therefore, with Lenorme, who went to find her. She came, threw her arms round his neck, and begged him to say whatever he thought best.

To add the final tinge to the rainbow of Malcolm's joy, on the morning of the dinner the schoolmaster arrived. It would be hard to say whether Malcolm or Clementina was the more delighted to see him. He said little with his tongue, but much with his eyes and face and presence.

This time the tables were not set in different parts of the grounds, but gathered upon the

level of the drive and the adjacent lawny spaces between the house and the trees. Malcolm, in full highland dress as chief of his clan, took the head of the central table, with Florimel in the place of honour at his right hand, and Clementina on his left. Lenorme sat next to Florimel, and Annie Mair next to Lenorme. On the other side, Mr. Graham sat next to Clementina, Miss Horn next to Mr. Graham, and Blue Peter next to Miss Horn. Except Mr. Morrison, he had asked none who were not his tenants, or servants, or in some way connected with the estates, except indeed a few whom he counted old friends, amongst them some aged beggar-folk, waiting their summons to Abraham's bosom—in which there was no such exceptional virtue on the marquis's part, for, the poor law not having yet invaded Scotland, a man was not without the respect of his neighbours merely because he was a beggar. He set Mr. Morrison to preside at the farmers' tables, and had all the fisher-folk about himself.

When the main part of the dinner was over, he rose, and with as much circumstance as he thought desirable, told his story, beginning

with the parts in it his uncle and Mrs. Catanach had taken. It was, however, he said, a principle in the history of the world, that evil should bring forth good, and his poor little cock-boat had been set adrift upon an ocean of blessing. For had he not been taken to the heart of one of the noblest and simplest of men, who had brought him up in honourable poverty and rectitude? When he had said this, he turned to Duncan, who sat at his own table behind him, with his pipes on a stool covered with a rich cloth by his side.

"You all know my grandfather," he went on, "and you all respect him."

At this rose a great shout.

"I thank you, my friends," he continued. "My desire is that every soul upon land of mine should carry himself to Duncan MacPhail as if he were in blood that which he is in deed and in truth, my grandfather."

A second great shout arose, which wavered and sank when they saw the old man bow his head upon his hands.

He went on to speak of the privileges he alone of all his race had ever enjoyed—the

privileges of toil and danger, with all their experiences of human dependence and divine aid; the privilege of the confidence and companionship of honourable labouring men, and the understanding of their ways and thoughts and feelings; and, above all, the privilege of the friendship and instruction of the schoolmaster, to whom he owed more than eternity could reveal.

Then he turned again to his narrative, and told how his father, falsely informed that his wife and child were dead, married Florimel's mother; how his mother, out of compassion for both of them, held her peace; how for twenty years she had lived with her cousin Miss Horn, and held her peace even from her; how at last, when, having succeeded to the property, she heard he was coming to the House, the thought of his nearness yet unapproachableness—in this way at least he, the child of both, interpreted the result—so worked upon a worn and enfeebled frame, that she died.

Then he told how Miss Horn, after his mother's death, came upon letters revealing the secret which she had all along known must exist, but

after which, from love and respect for her cousin, she had never inquired.

Last of all he told how, in a paroxysm of rage, Mrs. Catanach had let the secret of his birth escape her; how she had afterwards made affidavit concerning it; and how his father had upon his death-bed, with all necessary legal observances, acdnowledged him his son and heir.

"And now, to the mighty gladness of my soul," he said, looking on Florimel at his side, "my dearly loved and honoured sister, loved and honoured long before I knew she was my own, has accepted me as her brother, and I do not think she greatly regrets the loss of the headship of the house which she has passed over to me. She will lose little else. And of all women it may well be to her a small matter to lose a mere title, seeing she is so soon to change her name for one which will bring her honour of a more enduring reality. For he who is about to become her husband is not only one of the noblest of men, but a man of genius whose praises she will hear on all sides. One of his works, the labour and gift of love, you shall see when we rise from the table. It is a portrait of

your late landlord, my father, painted partly from a miniature, partly from my sister, partly from the portraits of the family, and partly, I am happy to think, from myself. You must yourselves judge of the truth of it. And you will remember that Mr. Lenorme never saw my father. I say this, not to excuse, but to enhance his work.

"My tenants, I will do my best to give you fair play. My friend and factor, Mr. Crathie, has confided to me his doubts whether he may not have been a little hard: he is prepared to reconsider some of your cases. Do not imagine that I am going to be a careless man of business. I want money, for I have enough to do with it, if only to set right much that is wrong. But let God judge between you and me.

"My fishermen, every honest man of you is my friend, and you shall know it. Between you and me that is enough. But for the sake of harmony, and right, and order, and that I may keep near you, I shall appoint three men of yourselves in each village, to whom any man or woman may go with request or complaint. If two of those three men judge the matter fit

to refer to me, the probability is that I shall see it as they do. If any man think them scant of justice towards him, let him come to me. Should I find myself in doubt, I have here at my side my loved and honoured master to whom to apply for counsel, knowing that what oracle he may utter I shall receive straight from the innermost parts of a temple of the Holy Ghost. Friends, if we be honest with ourselves, we shall be honest with each other.

"And, in conclusion, why should you hear from any lips but my own, that this lady beside me, the daughter of an English earl of ancient house, has honoured the house of Lossie by consenting to become its marchioness? Lady Clementina Thornicroft possesses large estates in the south of England, but not for them did I seek her favour—as you will be convinced when you reflect what the fact involves which she has herself desired me to make known to you—namely, that it was while yet she was unacquainted with my birth and position, and had never dreamed that I was other than only a fisherman and a groom, that she accepted me for her husband.—I thank my God."

With that he took his seat, and after hearty cheering, a glass or two of wine, and several speeches, all rose, and went to look at the portrait of the late marquis.

CHAPTER XVIII.

KNOTTED STRANDS.

LADY CLEMENTINA had to return to England to see her lawyers, and arrange her affairs. Before she went, she would gladly have gone with Malcolm over every spot where had passed any portion of his history, and at each heard its own chapter or paragraph; but Malcolm obstinately refused to begin such a narration before Clementina was mistress of the region to which it mainly belonged. After that, he said, he would, even more gladly, he believed, than she, occupy all the time that could be spared from the duties of the present in piecing together the broken reflections of the past in the pools of memory, until they had lived both their lives over again together, from earliest recollection to the time when the two streams flowed

into one, thenceforth to mingle more and more inwardly to endless ages.

So the Psyche was launched. Lady Clementina, Florimel, and Lenorme were the passengers, and Malcolm, Blue Peter, and Davy the crew. There was no room for servants, yet was there no lack of service. They had rough weather a part of the time, and neither Clementina nor Lenorme was altogether comfortable, but they made a rapid voyage, and were all well when they landed at Greenwich.

Knowing nothing of Lady Bellair's proceedings, they sent Davy to reconnoitre in Portland Place. He brought back word that there was no one in the house but an old woman. So Malcolm took Florimel there. Everything belonging to their late visitors had vanished, and nobody knew where they had gone.

Searching the drawers and cabinets, Malcolm, to his unspeakable delight, found a miniature of his mother, along with one of his father —a younger likeness than he had yet seen. Also he found a few letters of his mother—mostly mere notes in pencil; but neither these nor those of his father which Miss Horn had

given him, would he read: "What right has life over the secrets of death?" he said. "Or rather, what right have we who sleep over the secrets of those who have waked from their sleep and left the fragments of their dreams behind them?" Lovingly he laid them together, and burned them to dust flakes.

"My mother shall tell me what she pleases, when I find her," he said. "She shall not reprove me for reading her letters to my father."

They were married at Wastbeach, both couples in the same ceremony. Immediately after the wedding, the painter and his bride set out for Rome, and the marquis and marchioness went on board the Psyche. For nothing would content Clementina, troubled at the experience of her first voyage, but she must get herself accustomed to the sea, as became the wife of a fisherman; therefore in no way would she journey but on board the Psyche; and as it was the desire of each to begin their married life at home, they sailed direct for Portlossie. After a good voyage, however, they landed, in order to reach home quietly, at Duff Harbour, took horses from there, and arrived at Lossie House late in the evening.

Malcolm had written to the housekeeper to prepare for them the Wizard's Chamber, but to alter nothing on walls or in furniture. That room, he had resolved, should be the first he occupied with his bride. Mrs. Courthope was scandalized at the idea of taking an earl's daughter to sleep in the garret, not to mention that the room had for centuries had an ill name; but she had no choice, and therefore contented herself with doing all that lay in the power of woman, under such severe restrictions, to make the dingy old room cheerful.

Alone at length in their somewhat strange quarters, concerning which Malcolm had merely told her that the room was that in which he was born—what place fitter, thought Clementina, wherein to commence the long and wonderful story she hungered to hear. Malcolm would still have delayed it, but she asked question upon question till she had him fairly afloat. He had not gone far, however, before he had to make mention of the stair in the wall, which led from the place where they sat, straight from the house.

"Can there be such a stair in this room?" she asked in surprise.

He rose, took a candle, opened a door, then another, and showed her the first of the steps down which the midwife had carried him, and descending which, twenty years after, his father had come by his death.

"Let us go down," said Clementina.

"Are you not afraid? Look," said Malcolm.

"Afraid, and you with me!" she exclaimed.

"But it is dark, and the steps are broken."

"If it led to Hades, I would go with my fisherman. The only horror would be to be left behind."

"Come then," said Malcolm. "Only you must be very careful."

He laid a shawl on her shoulders, and down they went, Malcolm a few steps in front, holding the candle to every step for her, many being broken.

They came at length where the stair ceased in ruin. He leaped down; she stooped, put her hands on his shoulder, and dropped into his arms. Then over the fallen rubbish, out by the groaning door, they went into the moonlight.

Clementina was merry as a child. All was so

safe and peaceful with her fisherman! She would not hear of returning. They must have a walk in the moonlight first! So down the steps and the winding path into the valley of the burn, and up to the flower-garden they wandered, Clementina telling him how sick the moonlight had made her feel that night she met him first on the Boar's Tail, when his words concerning her revived the conviction that he loved Florimel. At the great stone basin Malcolm set the swan spouting, but the sweet musical jargon of the falling water seemed almost coarse in the soundless diapason of the moonlight. So he stopped it again, and they strolled farther up the garden.

Clementina venturing to remind him of the sexton-like gardener's story of the lady and the hermit's cave, which, because of its Scotch, she was unable to follow, Malcolm told her now what John Jack had narrated, adding that the lady was his own mother, and that from the gardener's tale he learned that morning at length how to account for the horror which had seized him on his first entering the cave, as also for his father's peculiar carriage on that occa-

sion: doubtless he then caught a likeness in him to his mother. He then recounted the occurrence circumstantially.

"I have ever since felt ashamed of the weakness," he concluded: "but at this moment I believe I could walk in with perfect coolness."

"We won't try it to-night," said Clementina, and once more turned him from the place, reverencing the shadow he had brought with him from the spirit of his mother.

They walked and sat and talked in the moonlight, for how long neither knew; and when the moon went behind the trees on the cliff, and the valley was left in darkness, but a darkness that seemed alive with the new day soon to be born, they sat yet, lost in a peaceful unveiling of hearts, till a sudden gust of wind roused Malcolm, and looking up he saw that the stars were clouded, and knew that the chill of the morning was drawing near.

He kept that chamber just as it was ever after, and often retired to it for meditation. He never restored the ruinous parts of the stair, and he kept the door at the top carefully closed. But he cleared out the rubbish that choked the

place where the stair had led lower down, came upon it again in tolerable preservation a little beneath, and followed it into a passage that ran under the burn, appearing to lead in the direction of the cave behind the Baillies' Barn. Doubtless there was some foundation for the legend of Lord Gernon.

There, however, he abandoned the work, thinking of the possibility of a time when employment would be scarce, and his people in want of all he could give them. And when such a time arrived, as arrive it did before they had been two years married, a far more important undertaking was found needful to employ the many who must earn or starve. Then it was that Clementina had the desire of her heart, and began to lay out the money she had been saving for the purpose, in rebuilding the ancient Castle of Colonsay. Its vaults were emptied of rubbish and ruin, the rock faced afresh, walls and towers and battlements raised, until at last, when the loftiest tower seemed to have reached its height, it rose yet higher, and blossomed in radiance; for, topmost crown of all, there, flaming far into the northern night,

shone a splendid beacon-lamp, to guide the fisherman when his way was hid.

Every summer for years, Florimel and her husband spent weeks in the castle, and many a study the painter made there of the ever-changing face of the sea.

Malcolm, as he well might, had such a strong feeling of the power for good of every high-souled schoolmaster, that nothing would serve him but Mr. Graham must be reinstated. He told the presbytery that if it were not done, he would himself build a school-house for him, and the consequence, he said, needed no prediction. Finding, at the same time, that the young man they had put in his place was willing to act as his assistant, he proposed that he should keep the cottage, and all other emoluments of the office, on the sole condition that, when he found he could no longer conscientiously and heartily further the endeavours of Mr. Graham, he should say so; whereupon the marquis would endeavour to procure him another appointment; and on these understandings the thing was arranged.

Mr. Graham thenceforward lived in the

House, a spiritual father to the whole family, reverenced by all, ever greeted with gladness, ever obeyed. The spiritual dignity and simplicity, the fine sense and delicate feeling of the man, rendered him a saving presence in the place; and Clementina felt as if one of the ancient prophets, blossomed into a Christian, was the glory of their family and house. Like a perfect daughter, she watched him, tried to discover preferences of which he might not himself be aware, and often waited upon him with her own hands.

There was an ancient building connected with the house, divided now for many years into barn and dairy, but evidently the chapel of the monastery: this Malcolm soon set about reconverting. It made a lovely chapel—too large for the household, but not too large for its congregation upon Wednesday evenings, when many of the fishermen and their families, and not a few of the inhabitants of the upper town, with occasionally several farm servants from the neighbourhood, assembled to listen devoutly to the fervent and loving expostulations and rousings, or the tender consolings and wise in-

structions of the *master*, as every one called him. The hold he had of their hearts was firm, and his influence on their consciences far reaching.

When there was need of conference, or ground for any wide expostulation, the marquis would call a meeting in the chapel; but this occurred very seldom. Now and then the master, sometimes the marquis himself, would use it for a course of lectures or a succession of readings from some specially interesting book; and in what had been the sacristy they gathered a small library for the use of the neighbourhood.

No meeting was held there of a Sunday, for although the clergyman was the one person to whom all his life the marquis never came any nearer, he was not the less careful to avoid everything that might rouse contention or encourage division. "I find the doing of the will of God," he would say, "leaves me no time for disputing about his plans—I do not say for thinking about them." Not therefore, however, would he waive the exercise of the inborn right of teaching, and anybody might come to the house and see the master on Sunday evenings. As to whether people went to church or stayed

away, he never troubled himself in the least; and no more did the schoolmaster.

The chapel had not been long finished when he had an organ built in it. Lady Lossie played upon it. Almost every evening, at a certain hour, she played for a while; the door was always open, and any one who pleased might sit down and listen.

Gradually the feeling of the community, from the strengthening and concentrating influence of the House, began to bear upon offenders; and any whose conduct had become in the least flagrant soon felt that the general eye was upon them, and that gradually the human tide was falling from them, and leaving them prisoned in a rocky basin on a barren shore. But at the same time, all three of the powers at the House were watching to come in the moment there was a chance; and what with the marquis's warnings, his wife's encouragements, and the master's expostulations, there was no little hope of the final recovery of several who would otherwise most likely have sunk deeper and deeper.

The marchioness took Lizzy for her personal attendant, and had her boy much about

her; so that by the time she had children of her own, she had some genuine and worthy notion of what a child was, and what could and ought to be done for the development of the divine germ that lay in the human egg; and had found that the best she could do for any child, or indeed anybody, was to be good herself.

Rose married a young fisherman, and made a brave wife and mother. To the end of her days she regarded the marquis almost as a being higher than human, an angel that had found and saved her.

Kelpie had a foal, and, apparently in consequence, grew so much more gentle that at length Malcolm consented that Clementina, who was an excellent horsewoman, should mount her. After a few attempts to unseat her, not of the most determined kind however, Kelpie, on her part, consented to carry her, and ever after seemed proud of having a mistress that could ride. Her foal turned out a magnificent horse. Malcolm did not allow him to do anything that could be called work before he was eight years old, and had the return at the

other end, for when Goblin was thirty he rode him still, and to judge by appearances, might but for an accident have ridden him ten years more.

It was not long ere people began to remark that no one now ever heard the piper utter the name *Campbell.* An ill-bred youth once—it was well for him that Malcolm was not near—dared the evil word in his presence: a cloud swept across the old man's face, but he held his peace; and to the day of his death, which arrived in his ninety-first year, it never crossed his lips. He died with the Lossie pipes on his bed, Malcolm on one side of him, and Clementina on the other.

Some of my readers may care to know that Phemy and Davy were married, and made the quaintest, oldest-fashioned little couple, with hearts which king or beggar might equally have trusted.

Malcolm's relations with the fisher-folk, founded as they were in truth and open uprightness, were not in the least injured by his change of position. He made it a point to be always at home during the herring-fishing. Whatever

might be going on in London, the marquis and marchioness, their family and household, were sure to leave in time for the commencement of that. Those who admired Malcolm, of whom there were not a few even in Vanity Fair, called him the fisher-king: the wags called him the king-fisher, and laughed at the oddity of his taste in preferring what he called his duty to the pleasures of the season. But the marquis found even the hen-pecked Partan a nobler and more elevating presence than any strutting platitude of Bond-street. And when he was at home, he was always about amongst the people. Almost every day he would look in at some door in the Seaton, and call out a salutation to the busy housewife—perhaps go in and sit down for a minute. Now he would be walking with this one, now talking with that—oftenest with Blue Peter; and sometimes both their wives would be with them, upon the shore, or in the grounds. Nor was there a family meal to which any one or all together of the six men whom he had set over the Seaton and Scaurnose would not have been welcomed by the marquis and his Clemency. The House was head and heart of the whole district.

A conventional visitor was certain to feel very shruggish at first sight of the terms on which the marquis was with "persons of that sort;" but often such a one came to allow that it was no great matter: the persons did not seem to presume unpleasantly, and, notwithstanding his atrocious training, the marquis was after all a very good sort of fellow—considering.

In the third year he launched a strange vessel. Her tonnage was two hundred, but she was built like a fishing-boat. She had great stowage forward and below: if there was a large take, boat after boat could empty its load into her, and go back and draw its nets again. But this was not the original design in her.

The after half of her deck was parted off with a light rope-rail, was kept as white as holystone could make it, and had a brass-railed bulwark. She was steered with a wheel, for more room; the top of the binnacle was made sloping, to serve as a lectern; there were seats all round the bulwarks; and she was called the Clemency.

For more than two years he had provided training for the fittest youths he could find amongst the fishers, and now he had a pretty

good band playing on wind instruments, able to give back to God a shadow of his own music. The same formed the Clemency's crew. And every Sunday evening, the great fishing boat with the marquis, and almost always the marchioness on board, and the latter never without a child or children, led out from the harbour such of the boats as were going to spend the night on the water.

When they reached the ground, all the other boats gathered about the great boat, and the chief men came on board, and Malcolm stood up betwixt the wheel and the binnacle, and read—always from the gospel, and generally words of Jesus, and talked to them, striving earnestly to get the truth alive into their hearts. Then he would pray aloud to the living God, as one so living that they could not see him, so one with them that they could not behold him. When they rose from their knees, man after man dropped into his boat, and the fleet scattered wide over the waters to search them for their treasure.

Then the little ones were put to bed; and Malcolm and Clementina would sit on the deck,

reading and talking, till the night fell, when they too went below, and slept in peace. But if ever a boat wanted help, or the slightest danger arose, the first thing was to call the marquis, and he was on deck in a moment.

In the morning, when a few of the boats had gathered, they would make for the harbour again, but now with full blast of praising trumpets and horns, the waves seeming to dance to the well ordered noise divine. Or if the wind was contrary, or no wind blew, the lightest-laden of the boats would take the Clemency in tow, and, with frequent change of rowers, draw her softly back to the harbour.

For such Monday mornings, the marquis wrote a little song, and his Clemency made an air to it, and harmonized it for the band. Here is the last stanza of it :—

> Like the fish that brought the coin,
> We in ministry will join—
> Bring what pleases thee the best;
> Help from each to all the rest.

THE END.

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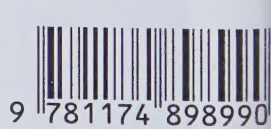

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